

the folk, roots and world music magazine

penguin eggs



Issue No. 59 autumn 2013 \$5.99



james cotton

...d, 'I'm Muddy Waters.' I said, 'I'm
...Christ.' I didn't believe him.

ton wainwright III

civil wars

win buddy guy's new disc rhythm & blues

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irish
all-stars
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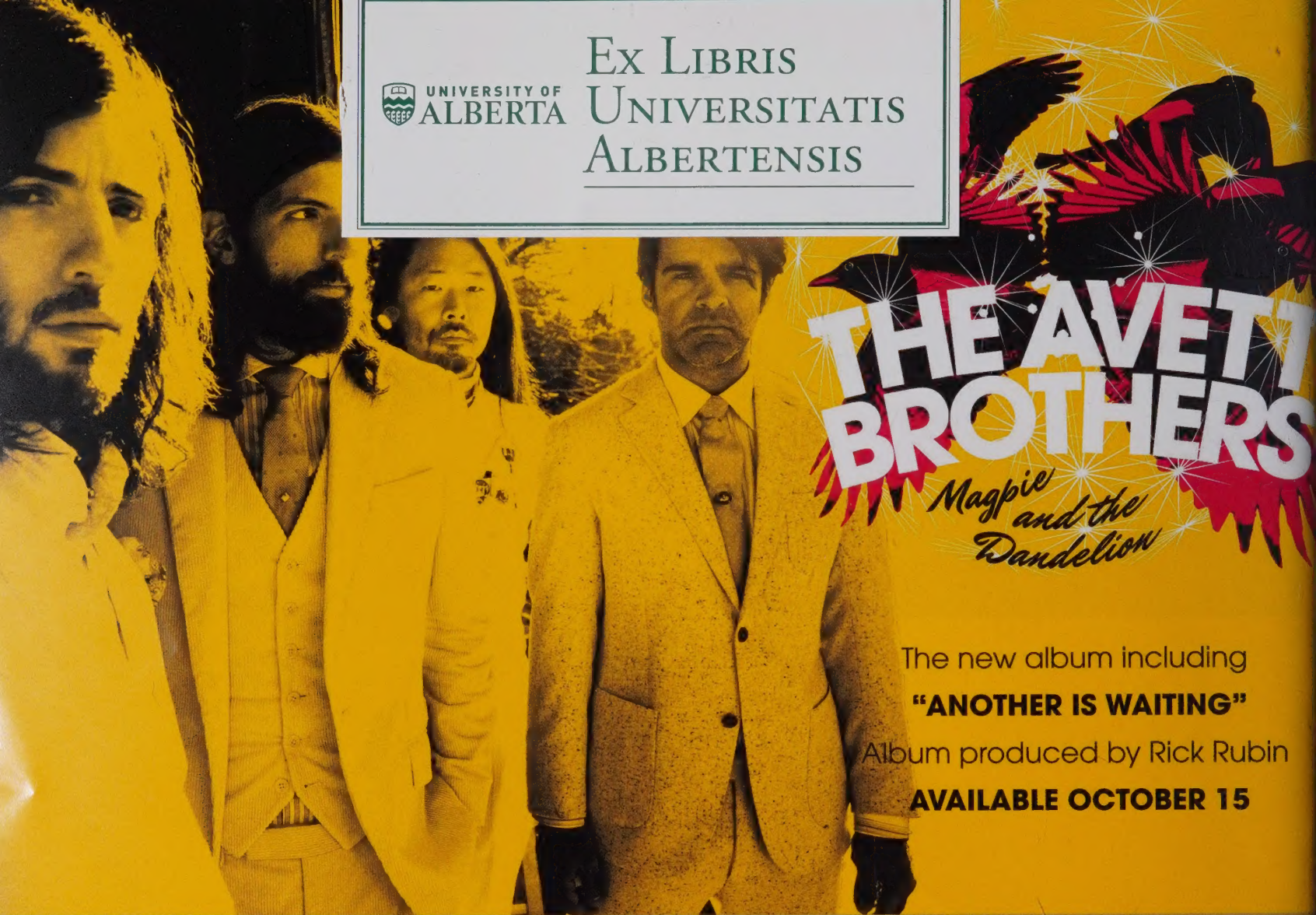
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penguin eggs

Canada's Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

Issue No. 59 Autumn, 2013

Issn: 73060205

10942 - 80 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta

Canada, T6G 0R1

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Penguin Eggs welcomes news, features and photos, but cannot accept responsibility for any unsolicited material. Please check with the editor prior to submitting any articles or artwork. We publish four times a year: Summer (June), Autumn (September), Winter (December) and Spring (March).

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album Penguin Eggs — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for many young, gifted performers.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. He now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes Penguin Eggs such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones's Penguin Eggs is available through Topic Records.

Penguin Eggs magazine is published and printed in Canada and acknowledges the generous financial support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.



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editorial

Blind Willie Johnson's *Let Your Light Shine On Me* came on the radio the other day. An oddity in itself, but stranger still, it brought the car to a complete stop. The power of that voice — raw, desperate, passionate, immense — literally sent shivers down my spine. A couple of days later, what pops up in my e-mail Inbox? A download for *The Rough Guide To Blues Legends: Blind Willie Johnson. Let Your Light Shine On Me*, indeed.

These acoustic, blues-based gospel and spirituals of his were recorded in the 1920s and '30s on, by today's standards, primitive equipment. It was all about exceptional talent and performance back then. One take. Done. Go listen to Johnson's infinitely sad confession *Lord I Just Can't Keep From Crying* or *It's Nobody's Fault But Mine*. Or hear his spellbinding slide guitar playing, chugging like a freight train through *Keep Your Lamp Trimmed And Burning* and *You're Gonna Need Somebody On Your Bond* — powerful, powerful performances. And just for reference sake, Johnson actually used the blade of a pocket-knife for a slide rather than a bottleneck. The Devil's in the details.

Johnson died in poverty in tragic circumstances in 1947 having recorded just 30 songs. Not a lot, really. But then again, it's the quality rather than the quantity, isn't it? How these gorgeously exquisite recordings survived all manner of social and economic upheaval surely offers a sliver of hope for a music industry now mired in so much uncertainty and upheaval.

Whatever, listening to Johnson triggered the same sense of wonder discovering 'country blues' for the first time an age ago. Country blues, now there's a lovely old term that fell by the wayside. It meant rural, rather than Nashville-inspired, acoustic blues as opposed to its urban, electric offshoot. I was a Howlin' Wolf man, me. Muddy Waters lacked Wolf's primal, high-octane energy and deep, compelling voice, which makes Tom Waits sound like a choirboy. My interest in the blues waned as the old masters passed on or ran out of creative steam. My chance encounter with Blind Willie Johnson changed all that, though, and sparked an interest in James Cotton's fine new recording, which inspired this issue's cover feature. Seeing him at the wonderful Edmonton Blues Festival just reinforced that decision. The past didn't go anywhere, as Utah Phillips used to remind us, it just needed a good airing.

— By Roddy Campbell

cover feature

46 The legendary master Sonny Boy Williamson II taught James Cotton to play harmonica. He went on to redefine post-war, modern blues performing alongside Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters. Cotton remains one of the last great Mississippi Delta bluesmen.

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quotable

"If you were there and saw the whole place looking like a bowl filled with dirty brown water, almost to the brim, just four short weeks previous, some of it eight or more feet deep, it was pretty hard to believe that so many people were walking, camping, dancing and sleeping on the same spot."

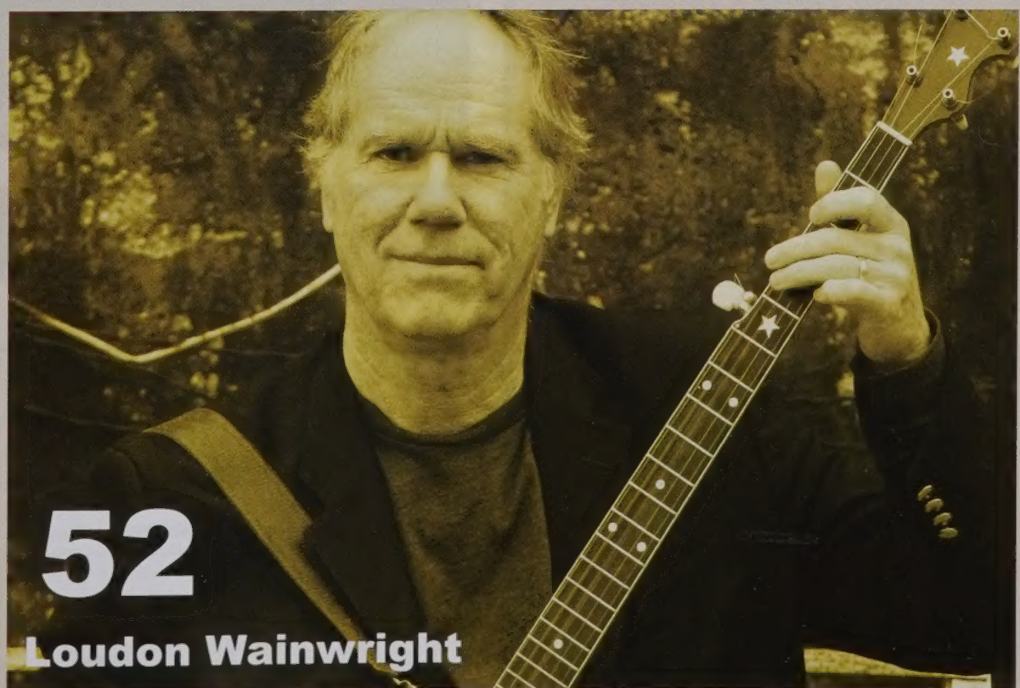
– Trent Moranz describes the South Country Fair after the Alberta floods in June.

"They are all on my new album and they are great singers. It's kind of like the dysfunctional Von Trapp family. Like if Christopher Plummer was a roaring alcoholic and Julie Andrews was a loose woman. What an exciting thought that is! My goodness!"

– Loudon Wainwright talks about his children

"He had a bad temper and he would hit you. He had a knife and he would use it."

– James Cotton on Sonny Boy Williamson II



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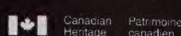
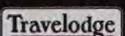
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cara luft's all-time top 10

Bruce Cockburn
The Charity of Night (True North)

Dick Gaughan
Handful of Earth (Topic)

Emmylou Harris
Wrecking Ball (Elektra Records)

Fairport Convention
Liege & Lief (Island)

Pentangle
Early Classics (Shanachie)

Tim Hart & Maddy Prior
Heydays (Sanctuary Records)

Bernice Johnson Reagon
River of Life: Harmony One (Goldenrod Music)

Stan Rogers
Between the Breaks... Live (Fogarty's Cove Music)

Steeleye Span
Hark! The Village Wait (RCA)

Various Artists
A Vision Shared - A Tribute to Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly (Shanachie)

Cara Luft's latest recording is called Darlingford.
Our feature on Carla runs on page 25.



Cara Luft

fred's records top 5

1. **Witloof Bay**
Witloof Bay (Witloof Music)

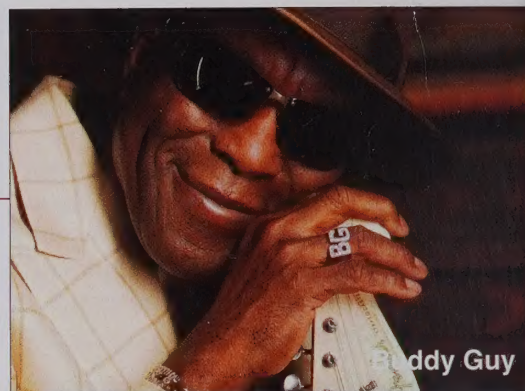
5. **The Once**
The Once (Borealis)

3. **Matthew Hornell**
Have It All (Independent)

4. **The Once**
Row Upon Row Of The People They Know (Borealis)

5. **Amelia Curran**
Spectators (Six Shooter Records)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at
Fred's Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 1G5



Buddy Guy

10 years go

1. **The Be Good Tanyas**
Chinatown (Netwerk)
2. **Gillian Welch**
Soul Journey (Stony Plain)
3. **Lucinda Williams**
World Without Tears (Lost Highway)
4. **Blackie And The Rodeo Kings**
BARK (True North)
5. **Po' Girl**
Po' Girl (Festival)
6. **Daniel Lanois**
Shine (Anti)
7. **Jayhawks**
Rainy Day Music (Lost Highway)
8. **Buddy Guy**
Blues Singer (Silverstone)
9. **Kathleen Edwards**
Failer (Maple)
10. **Le Vent du Nord**
Maudite Maisson! (Borealis)

Compiled from all album sales on the Charts page in Penguin Eggs
issue No. 19, published in the Autumn of 2003.

wfmfm's top 10

1. **Gordon Lightfoot**
All Live (Warners)
2. **Lyle Lovett**
Release Me (Universal)
3. **James Cotton**
Cotton Mouth Man (Alligator)
4. **Leonard Cohen**
Old Ideas (Columbia)
5. **The Tallest Man On Earth**
There's No Leaving Now (Dead Oceans)
6. **Dr. John**
Locked Down (Nonesuch)
7. **Royal Wood**
We Were Born To Glory (MapleMusic)
8. **Fred Eaglesmith**
6 Volts (A Major Label)
9. **Andrew Bird**
Break It Yourself (Sony)
10. **Bruce Springsteen**
Wrecking Ball (Sony)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at the Winnipeg Folk Music
Festival's Music Store, 203-Bannatyne Ave., Winnipeg, MB. R3B 3P2

highlife top 10

1. **Steve Earle**
Low Highway (New West)
2. **Rodriguez**
Searching For Sugarman (Sony)
3. **Charles Bradley**
Victim of Love (Daptone)
4. **Bombino**
Nomad (Nonesuch)
5. **Nicolas Repac**
Black Box (Naive)
6. **Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell**
Old Yellow Moon (Nonesuch)
7. **Dr. John**
Locked Down (Nonesuch)
8. **Kevin Finseth**
The Wounded Quartet (Independent)
9. **Vieux Farka Toure**
Mon Pays (Six Degrees)
10. **The National**
Trouble Will Find Me (4AD)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at
Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

permanent records top 10

1. **Steve Earle**
Low Highway (New West)
2. **Jr. Gone Wild**
Less Art More Pop (Jr. Gone Wild)
3. **Charles Bradley**
Victim of Love (Daptone)
4. **James Cotton**
Cotton Mouth Man (Alligator)
5. **Matt Patershuk**
Outside The Lights Of Town (Goat Trail)
6. **Laura Marling**
I Once Was An Eagle (Domino)
7. **Hans Theesink**
Wishing Well (Blue Groove)
8. **Steve Martin & Edie Brickell**
Love Has Come For You (Rounder)
9. **Bombino**
Nomad (Nonesuch)
10. **Patty Griffin**
American Kid (New West)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at
Permanent Records, 8126 Gateway Blvd. Edmonton, AB, T6E 4B1



Rodney Crowell & Emmylou Harris



sillions top 10

1. **Les Soeurs Boulay**
Le poids des confettis (DEP)
2. **Anne Sylvestre**
Juste une femme (EPM)
3. **Various Artists**
Celebrating The Works Of Kate McGarrigle (Nonesuch)
4. **Tire Le Coyote**
Mitan (DEP)
5. **Laura Marling**
I Once Was An Eagle (Domino)
6. **Fred Pellerin**
Silence (Disques Tempête)
7. **Galant, tu perds ton temps**
Soyez heureux (DEP)
8. **Jorane**
L'instant aimé (DEP)
9. **Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell**
Old Yellow Moon (Nonesuch)
10. **Ablaye Cissoko & Volker Goetze**
Amanké Dionti (Motema)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at
Sillions, 1149 Avenue Cartier, Quebec, QC, G1R 2S9.

soundscapes top 10

1. **Jim Guthrie**
Takes Time (Static Clang)
2. **Laura Marling**
I Once Was An Eagle (Domino)
3. **Good Family**
Good Family (Latent)
4. **Various Artists**
Celebrating The Works Of Kate McGarrigle (Nonesuch)
5. **Al Tuck**
Stranger At The Wake (Cameron House)
6. **Rodriguez**
Searching For Sugarman (Sony)
7. **Rodriguez**
Cold Fact (Light In The Attic)
8. **Steve Earle**
Low Highway (New West)
9. **Phosphorescent**
Muchacho (Dead Oceans)
10. **Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell**
Old Yellow Moon (Nonesuch)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at
Soundscapes, 572 College St., Toronto, On, M6G 1B3.

ckua top 20

1. **Chloe Albert**
Dream Catcher (Independent)
2. **Doug Hoyer**
To Be a River (Old Ugly)
3. **Patty Griffin**
American Kid (New West)
4. **Iron & Wine**
Ghost On Ghost (Nonesuch)
5. **Preservation Hall Jazz Band**
That's It! (Legacy)
6. **Kobo Town**
Jumbie In the Jukebox (Stonetree)
7. **James Cotton**
Cotton Mouth Man (Alligator)
8. **The Garifuna Collective**
Ayo (Stonetree)
9. **Mavis Staples**
One True Vine (ANTI)
10. **Various Artists**
Ghost Brothers Of Darkland County (Concord)
11. **Scott Cook**
One More Time Around (Independent)
12. **Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings**
Give the People What They Want (Daptone)
13. **Amos Garrett Jazz Trio**
Jazzblues (Stony Plain)
14. **KT Tunstall**
Invisible Empire/Crescent Moon (Virgin)
15. **Josh Ritter**
The Beast In Its Tracks (Pytheas/Redeye)
16. **Steve Martin & Edie Brickell**
Love Has Come For You (Rounder)
17. **Leeroy Stagger**
Truth Be Sold (Gold Lake)
18. **Buddy Guy**
Rhythm & Blues (RCA)
19. **Steve Earle**
Low Highway (New West)
20. **Various Artists**
Remembering Little Walter (Blind Pig)

Based on the most-played folk, roots and world music dics on CKUA
radio - www.ckua.org throughout May, June and July.



Laura Marling

News•Gossip•Rumour•Tattle

The floods that ravaged southern Alberta June 22 and 23 caused havoc for the Calgary Folk Music Festival and the South Country Fair. While the Canmore Folk Music Festival escaped largely unharmed, the home of its former artistic director, **Ken Rooks**, suffered significant damage.

In Calgary the Bow River burst its banks and flooded Prince's Island Park—the downtown site for the annual event. By the time the water subsided, tons of silt and sewage needed removal and the only causeway that linked the island to the city required considerable repairs.

It took a month of intense work by the City of Calgary's Parks employees—as well as a one-day volunteer cleanup that saw 250 people show up—before the organizers opened the gates to an all-but-sold-out festival. Unfortunately, it lost two workshop stages but was able to shift one to nearby Eau Claire Market, which allowed Calgarians a taste of the festival for free. Further evening and afternoon performances were added to two workshop stages to avoid reduced programming.

"Everyone—Parks, volunteers, the audience and artists stepped up," says artistic director **Kerry Clarke**. "Their flexibility, hard work and generosity made the festival happen and made for an especially magical year."

The Calgary Folk Music Festival received two accolades just prior to the flood: an Alberta Emerald Award, for its environmental initiatives, and the self-explanatory City of Calgary Award for Environmental Achievement.

The South Country Fair's venue—the Fish and Game Park near Fort McLeod—was also under water. The damage included silt in all the buildings, gravel washed off approach roads, and debris and drift piles in the campsite. Most of the firewood for campers drifted away along with a large number of picnic tables.

"We put in almost 400 extra hours to get the site and campground dried out," says artistic director **Trent Moranz**. "We went straight from flood remediation to setting up the festival without a pause."

"I know there were people who had to change their plans because they, or someone they knew, were affected by the disastrous flooding just north of us in High River, but our audience held."

"If you were there and saw the whole place looking like a bowl filled with dirty brown water, almost to the brim, just four short weeks previous, some of it eight or more feet deep, it was pretty hard to believe that so many people were walking, camping, dancing and sleeping on the same spot."

Veteran blues and jazz guitarist **Amos Garrett**, a High River resident, was forced to flee his home as almost seven feet of water poured into his basement. Garrett lost at least two vintage guitars and numerous personal belongings. A benefit concert featuring the likes of **Kevin Breit**, **Russell deCarle** and **Luke Doucet** was held at Hugh's Room in Toronto, Aug. 14, to raise funds for Garrett. A second benefit will take place at the Newcastle Pub and Grill in Edmonton, Nov. 16, and will feature several of his Alberta musical colleagues such as **Rusty Reid** and **Dave Babcock**. A silent auction will include collectibles and a painting by **Mendelson Joe**.



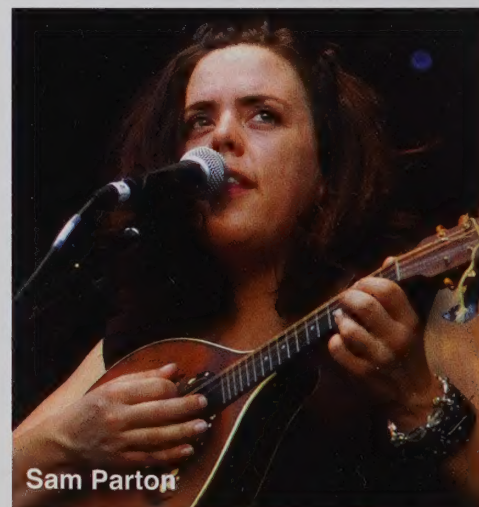
The Be Good Tanyas's Sam Parton faces cranial surgery Sept. 3, to have a brain aneurysm clipped. The estimated recovery period ranges from six weeks to a year, which will leave her in a difficult position financially. Her friends and fans, however, have rallied around to raise \$15,000 to see her through this difficult time.

Parton's problems began last September when a speeding truck ran into her friend's car at high speed on Saltspring Island, BC. She sustained a concussion and multiple injuries to her neck, back and shoulders. In early April, she was involved in a second car crash, which compounded her existing



Photo: Reuters - Andy Clark

Prince's Island Park sits outlined by trees in the center of this flood photo



Sam Parton

injuries. A scan turned up a small, benign tumour on the right side of her brain. However, when doctors looked at it through an MRI they discovered a large aneurysm behind her left eye and decided to deal with it.

She struggles to play her instruments without pain, and is only able to do so for brief periods and will not return to performing until she is fully recovered. The Be Good Tanyas continue to honour their tour commitments, and head to the U.K. in late August with Vancouver musician **Caroline Ballhorn** filling in on harmonies.

Donations to the Sam Parton fund are accepted via credit card or PayPal at www.indiegogo.com/projects/samantha-parton-needs-our-help. Cheques can be mailed directly to Samantha Parton, PO Box 88066, Chinatown, Vancouver, BC, V6A 4A4.



Gogol Bordello's front man, **Eugene Hütz**, absconded with half a million dollars of the band's money, alleges a lawsuit filed in New York on behalf of their former guitarist **Oren Kaplan** and the band's business entity, Gypsy Punks LLC. It charges Hütz with breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duty and unjust enrichment. Kaplan wants personal damages of at least \$950,000, plus another \$950,000 to be paid back to Gypsy Punks.

Kaplan joined Gogol Bordello in 2000, co-writing many of the group's songs, while jointly overseeing its financial affairs. According to *The Guardian*, Hütz allegedly took over all of Gogol Bordello's accounting in 2009 and began paying himself twice as much as any other band member. Kaplan also claims the singer created his own

corporations and lent them an interest-free \$500,000 loan.

Kaplan left the New York group in 2012 after his accountant discovered Hütz's transactions, as well as details of Gogol Bordello's contract with Coca-Cola to use their song *Let's Get Crazy* to promote the Euro 2012 football championships held in Ukraine and Poland.

"Hütz secretly entered into a promotional deal for the group with Coca-Cola without telling the plaintiff about it," the suit alleges. Hütz has yet to respond to these allegations.

Gogol Bordello were the cover feature in *Penguin Eggs* issue No 37.



The Montreal, QC, borough of Outremont honoured the late **Kate McGarrigle** by naming a park after her. Place Kate-McGarrigle on the city's avenue Laurier near Querbes was officially opened Aug. 7. "For many years, Kate was a familiar figure on Laurier and the family is very touched by this gesture," wrote **Anna McGarrigle** on the sisters' website.

Kate, the mother of **Rufus** and **Martha Wainwright**, died Jan. 18, 2010. The extended family unveiled her grave headstone, Aug. 4, in St-Sauveur Parish Cemetery. The simple white stone designed by Rufus and Martha features a drawing of Kate's 'Skigirl' on the front and a banjo incorporating lyrics from Kate's *Talk to Me of Mendocino*, drawn by Rufus, on the back.



The Jim Kweskin Jug Band will reunite for a brief U.S. tour in late August with original members **Ben Keith** and **Maria and Geoff Mulduar** to celebrate the band's 50th anniversary. **Fritz Richmond** and **Mel**

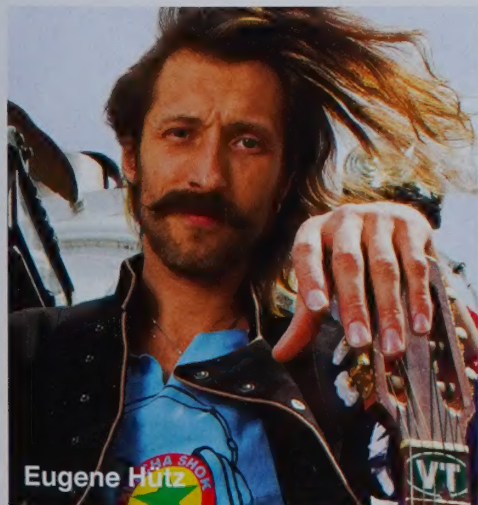
Lyman, the other co-founders of the band, have both passed away. Kweskin and his entourage initially emerged in 1963 from Harvard Square's Club 47 in Cambridge, MA. Their repertoire consisted of a hybrid of old-time jazz, blues, and folk. It caught the ear of **Maynard Solomon**, co-founder of Vanguard Records. Solomon asked Kweskin if he wanted to make a record with his band, to which he famously replied, "Well, that's not a band, but I'd love to make a record."

With their zany humour and serious musical chops, they created a free-spirited, fun, live presence before running out of steam in 1968. Bands such as the **Carolina Chocolate Drops** and **The Grateful Dead** cite them as direct influences. Maria Muldaur, of course, went on to international success with her hit single and album *Midnight At The Oasis*.



Graham Nash will provide the keynote speech at the 26th annual North American Folk Alliance convention, which runs Feb. 19-23 at the Sheraton Crown Center in Kansas City, MO. A founding member of both **Crosby, Stills & Nash**, and **The Hollies**, Nash has just completed his autobiography, *Wild Tales*, set for release in September. Convention delegates will have an opportunity to meet Nash to have their book autographed.

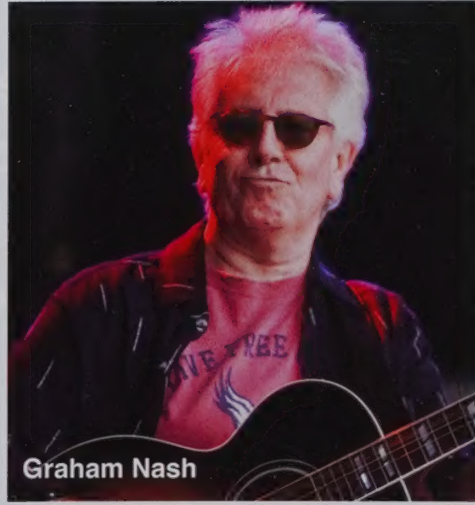
The convention will run concurrently with the alliance's inaugural Winter Music Camp. Beginner or master, the camp will offer a huge selection of instructional choices for various instruments, vocals, recording, theory, and more. Renowned instructors booked to date include: **Byron**



Eugene Hütz



Kate and Anna McGarrigle



Graham Nash



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Berline (fiddle), **Doug Cox** (Dobro), **Bill Evans** (banjo), **Lloyd Maines** (steel guitar), **Ken Perlman** (clawhammer banjo) and **Steve James** (guitar).

The five-day conference draws together folk music industry professionals from all over the world to exhibit their wares, for panel discussions, workshops, and meetings that address critical issues relating to presenting, promoting, and preserving folk and traditional music. It also includes 200 official performances and more than 300 private showcases. Toronto hosted last year's convention, which was widely considered the most successful to date. For more information, go to: www.folkalliance.org/conference/

Harmonica maestro **Mike Stevens** will receive the 2013 **Estelle Klein** Award at a gala dinner during the 27th annual Ontario Council of Folk Festivals convention in Mississauga, ON, Oct. 17-20, 2013.

Arguably best known as a bluegrass musician through his 15-year association with **Jim and Jesse**, Stevens logged more than 300 appearances at the Grand Ole Opry. The late **Roy Acuff** considered himself a fan. Stevens has recorded 10 solo albums and *Push, Record: The Banff Sessions* with Matt Andersen. In 2012, he received the inaugural Innovator of the Year Award at the Canadian Folk Music Awards held in Saint John, NB. He also co-founded the outreach program ArtsCan Circle, which connects creative artists with indigenous youth in isolated northern communities.

The Estelle Klein Award honours the work of an individual or group that has made significant contributions to Ontario's folk music community. Past recipients include **Stan**

Rogers, **Sylvia Tyson**, and **Ian Tamblyn**.

For more information about the OCFF conference, go to www.ocff.ca

Amelia Curran, **James Keelaghan** and **Oscar Lopez**, **The Fretless**, **Christina Smith** and **Jean Hewson**, **Lorne Elliott**, and **Oh My Darling** will perform at the 9th annual Canadian Folk Music Awards. The gala event takes place at the University of Calgary Theatre, Calgary, AB, Nov. 10. Bilingual hosts, CBC Radio's **Shelagh Rogers** and musician **Benoit Bourque** of **La Bottine Souriante**, will oversee the presentation of 20 awards throughout the evening. Nominations for the CFMAs will be announced at a press conference in October. Tickets for the gala are \$40 and are available at www.ucalgary.ca/tickets/ or in person.

Multi-instrumentalist **Richard Parry** of Montreal-based mega roots-rockers **Arcade Fire** has formed a folk band as a side project. The brother of songwriter and performance poet **Evalyn Parry** and the son of the late **David Parry**—a traditional singer and concertina player with **Friends of Fiddlers Green**—has put together **Quiet River of Dust**. They played as a quartet at the recent Hillside music festival in Guelph, ON. Parry told CBC an album is in the works with eight songs already partially prepared. "It feels kind of wonderful to play songs ... that people have never heard and the only way they can hear them is when we play them again, which is not very often," he said. Parry stepped out previously, recording and performing with the instrumental **Bell Orchestre**. He is also currently writing songs with **Dallas Good**

of **The Sadies**. Arcade Fire's fourth disc is due for release Oct. 29.

Penguin Eggs editor **Roddy Campbell** will appear on CKUA's *Celtic Show*, hosted by **Andy Donnelly**, on the first Friday of each month. The two will present the *Penguin Eggs* album picks of the month and chat about all provincial, national, and international matters related to folk music. *The Celtic Show* runs every Friday from 6 to 8 p.m., MST, on the CKUA Radio Network throughout Alberta and at www.ckua.com on the Internet.

Linda Ronstadt revealed to *AARP* magazine, in an interview posted on the Internet Aug. 23, she can no longer sing due to Parkinson's disease—a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system. The 67-year-old singer was diagnosed eight months ago. In its infancy, Parkinson's causes shaking, rigidity, and slowness of movement. Although Ronstadt began to show these symptoms eight years ago, she thought it was the result of a shoulder operation.

She will release her autobiography, *Simple Dreams*, Sept. 17, through Simon and Schuster. While it makes no mention of her poor health, it follows her career from a childhood in Tucson, AZ, to becoming the highest paid female entertainer in the world in the late '70s, to her retirement in 2009. Ronstadt won 11 Grammy Awards and was courted by such celebrities as filmmaker **George Lucas** and California Governor **Jerry Brown**. She has collaborated and recorded with such diverse artists as **The Chieftains**, **Gram Parsons**, **Dolly Parton**, **Neil Young**, and **Kate and McGarrigle**.



Mike Stevens



Andy Donnelly



Linda Ronstadt



Bobby "Blue" Bland

Bobby (Blue) Bland 1930 - 2013

Bobby (Blue) Bland, one of the principal pioneers of the modern blues-soul sound and a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, died June 23 at his home in Germantown, TN, a suburb of Memphis. He was 83, writes Roddy Campbell.

While Bland never received the popular acclaim bestowed on such contemporaries as B.B. King or Ray Charles, he still enjoyed a great deal of popularity maintained by his numerous successes on the R&B charts and his emotionally fraught live performances. His vocal mastery, which spanned the gamut from growls to sighs, influenced such diverse acts as Otis Redding, The Allman Brothers, The Grateful Dead, The Band, Simply Red, Jay-Z and Van Morrison. Indeed, when Morrison played the Edmonton Folk Music Festival in 2010 he requested Bland open the show.

Born Robert Calvin Brooks, Jan. 27, 1930, in Rosemark, TN, just north of Memphis, his father abandoned the family when his son was very young. His mother, Mary Lee, then married Leroy Bland when Bobby was six. He would leave school in Grade 3 to pick cotton but later moved to Memphis in 1947. There he joined The Beale Streeters, a freewheeling collective

whose members might include Johnny Ace, Rosco Gordon, Earl Forest and B.B. King at any given time.

While Bland recorded singles in 1950, '51 and '52 for such labels as Chess, Tandem and Duke, he had yet to develop his smooth, shimmering soul sensibility. That would develop after being drafted into the army in 1952. Demobbed in 1955, his vocal progress stunned his Memphis friends. Bland cited Aretha Franklin's father, Reverend C.L. Franklin, and B.B. King as the inspiration for his now uniquely stylized singing. Bland would also tip his hat to such crooners as Nat King Cole, Perry Como and Tony Bennett.

Bland also began working with the Bill Harvey Orchestra and, in particular, its trumpet player and arranger Joe Scott, who became an integral part of Bland's career. His first hit came in 1957 with the release of *Farther Up The Road*, followed a year later by the equally successful show-stopper *Little Boy Blue*. While he largely worked the "chitlin' circuit" of southern theatres and clubs in the late '50s, touring with Junior Parker, Bland maintained a string of hits that included *I'll Take Care of You*, *I Pity The Fool* and *Cry, Cry, Cry* that sold anywhere from 500,000 to one million copies. Indeed, throughout the '60s, Bland placed more than a dozen records in the R&B top 10 despite being an alcoholic. He had a drinking problem for 18 years before stopping in 1971, he told author Peter Guralnick.

Soul, meanwhile, was undergoing serious changes through Sax and Tamala Mowtown recordings. And when ABC bought Duke Records, they rebranded Bland as a mainstream soul singer on such best-selling albums as *His California Album* (1973), *Dreamer* (1974) and *Reflections in Blue* (1977). There were collaborations with B.B. King, too, however.

By 1985, Bland had signed with Mississippi-based Malaco Records and released a series of well-received discs that primarily appealed to blues and soul fans. He made his last album *Blues At Midnight* in 2003. All in all Bland placed 63 singles on the charts from 1957 to 1985.

He was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1981, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992, and received a Grammy lifetime achievement award in 1997.

Louisa (Louis) Killen 1934 - 2013

Lou Killen, writes Ken Hunt, was one of the foundational figures of the generation after Bert Lloyd and Ewan MacColl in Britain's folk revival. Born Louis Joseph Killen, the fourth of four sons to Mary Margaret (née Nolan) and Francis Killen on Jan. 10, 1934, in Gateshead, then in Co. Durham. It was after returning in 2004 to Gateshead and the arms of Britain's National Health Service that Killen set in motion the long-held transgender dream of becoming Louisa Killen.

In 1966 Izzy Young reviewed Killen as "the most uncompromising of the second generation of English city folksingers" in *Sing Out!* and Killen proved a great British export to North America. Having moved to the United States in 1967, he made it his principal base of operations, whether working as a solo performer, as Tommy Makem's replacement in the Clancy Brothers (1971-1974), as part of Pete Seeger's Clearwater project (appearing on two Hudson River Sloop Restoration LPs) or guesting, for example, on Judy Collins's *True Stories* and Robin Williamson & His Merry Band's *American Stonehenge*.

As a song interpreter and concertina accompanist, Killen believed too many interpreters detracted from the narrative, vocally and/or instrumentally, by overegging. As a visiting tutor for Newcastle's Folk and Traditional Music degree course or an inspiration teaching to how deliv-



Louisa (Louis) Killen

er a song straight, Killens's legacy and open-handed largesse touched the latest generation, of which Alex Neilson of Trembling Bells, Jackie Oates, Emily Portman, and James Yorkston are but four. Forgiving of old friends' stumbles between Louis and Louisa, in her own way she taught the British folk scene a valuable lesson in toleration. Louisa Jo Killen died, aged 79, at her home in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, on Aug. 9, 2013.

Willie Dunn 1942 - 2013

First Nations activist, songwriter, poet, playwright, film and documentary maker Willie Dunn died after a lengthy illness at his home in Ottawa Aug. 5. He was 71, writes Roddy Campbell. Born in Montreal Aug 14, 1942, the son of a Scottish father and a Mi'kmaq mother, and the seventh of eight children, Willie took his initial musical inspiration from the urban folk boom of the late 1950s/early '60s, frequently visiting New York's Greenwich Village and Toronto's Yorkville coffee house scene.

Blessed with a beautiful, rich and resonant voice, he described himself as a topical songwriter. And rightly so as much of his work highlighted the struggles of Canada's First Nations. He released his debut album *Willie Dunn* in 1971 and followed that with *The Pacific* nine years later. The latter clearly shows a sense of artistic adventure pairing William Shakespeare's *Sonnet 33* and 55 with a traditional *Friendship Dance*, and T.S. Elliott's poem *The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock* with a *Mowhawk Round Dance*. These are the only two albums of all-original material Dunn released but there have been several re-issues including *Metallic* (1999) and *Son of the Sun* (2005). Kashtin recorded the title track of this last compilation on their album *Innu* (1991).

In 1968 Dunn made a short film for the National Film Board of Canada accompanied throughout by his epic song *The Ballad of Crowfoot*. It won a Gold Hugo for best short film at the 1969 Chicago International Film Festival and is now widely considered as the first musical video made in this country. His films include *The Eagle Project*, *The Voice of the Land* and *Self-Government*. In the 1993, Dunn ran in the federal election as an NDP candidate



but was defeated by the Liberal incumbent.

Willie Dunn was inducted into the Aboriginal Walk of Honour in Edmonton, AB, in 2005. He is survived by his partner, Liz Moore, sons William and Lawrence and daughter Pamela.

J.J. Cale 1938 - 2013

J.J. Cale, one of the most iconic guitar players of the 20th century, died of a heart attack July 26 at Scripps Hospital in La Jolla, CA. He was 74, writes Roddy Campbell.

Such guitar heavyweights as Mark Knopfler, Eric Clapton, and Neil Young all cite Cale as an inspiration. Alongside Leon Russell, Cale created the Tulsa sound—a sweet, shuffling melding of rockabilly, blues, country, and rock—that provided the backbone for his songs, many of which Santana, The Allman Brothers, Johnny Cash, The Band, Chet Atkins, Freddie

King, Maria Muldaur, and Captain Beefheart covered.

It's through the patronage of Eric Clapton, though, that Cale's fame spread. 'Slowhand' cut Cale's *After Midnight* on his first solo album in 1970. The subsequent single made it into the U.S. Top 20.

"I had already given up on the business part of the record business and had moved back to Tulsa and had gotten me a job playing with some friends of mine," Cale posted on his website. "When Eric cut that song it opened up a bunch of doors."

Clapton would also cover Cale's *Cocaine*, *I'll Make Love To You Anytime*, *Travelin' Light* and *Angel*. Together they did *The Road To Escondido*, which won a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Blues album in 2008.

John Weldon Cale was born on Dec. 5, 1938, in Oklahoma City and brought up in Tulsa. He played in Leon Russell's bar band The Starlighters and guested with various Western swing and rock'n'roll bands throughout the mid-1950s. Cale tried his hand unsuccessfully in Nashville before Russell persuaded him to move to Los Angeles in the early '60s, where he was a leading session musician. Cale, too, quickly secured session work, and in 1967 made his debut LP, *A Trip Down the Sunset Strip*, backed by The Leathercoated Minds.

He was now known as J.J. Cale—a name



coined by Elmer Valentine, owner of the famed Whisky a Go Go nightclub, so as not to create confusion with John Cale, the bassist and violist with the Velvet Underground. In 1969, thanks to Russell, Cale was invited to tour with Delaney & Bonnie Bramlett, who were appearing alongside Eric Clapton. Thus, the initial connection with Clapton was made.

Through the success of *After Midnight*, Cale was offered a record deal in Nashville where he recorded *Naturally* (1972). It was released jointly by Russell's Shelter Records and A&M and produced his only hit single, *Crazy Mama*. He would go on to record such critically lauded albums as *Really, Okie, Troubadour*, *5, Shades* and *Grasshopper*. *Roll On*, his last album of original material, was released in 2009. However, there have been nine compilations of his material since 1984.

"Basically, I'm just a guitar player that figured out I wasn't ever gonna be able to buy dinner with my guitar playing. So I got into songwriting, which is a little more profitable business," Cale wrote on his website. A celebration of his life was held at McCabe's in Santa Monica, CA, on Aug. 6.

Toshi Seeger 1922 - 2013

Filmmaker, music promoter and environmental activist Toshi-Aline Ohta Seeger, the wife of folk music legend Pete Seeger, died July 9, nine days short of their 70th wedding anniversary. She was 91, writes Roddy Campbell.

"She was such an extraordinary person. All I can say is that we—I think we needed each other," said Pete, interviewed by Amy Goodman of *Democracy Today* TV.

"She was the brains of the family. I'd get an idea and she would make it work."

Toshi was born July 1, 1922, in Munich, Germany, to a Japanese father and an American mother. The family, however, relocated to the U.S. before her first birthday.

She grew up in New York's Greenwich Village, where she met Seeger as a 16-year-old, and the couple married in 1943 when she was 21.

"We met square dancing in New York, and I came to sing for the square dance group and stayed to dance," said Pete.



"And then I remember she volunteered to help me alphabetize a big mess of songs that I had."

Toshi would organize many of her husband's concerts. And when it came to planning the Newport Folk Festival in 1959 with George Wein, she insisted every artist, no matter their stature, be paid the same fee. That policy was universally adopted and remained in place in Canada until Holger Petersen changed it at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival in 1986.

Toshi also made such films as *Afro-American Work Songs in a Texas Prison*, which can be found in the Library of Congress archives. When Pete hosted the TV show *Rainbow Quest* in 1965 and '66, she directed it. Its guests included Mississippi John Hurt, Doc Watson, The Stanley Brothers, Tom Paxton and Donovan. She was also the executive producer of the 2007 PBS documentary *Pete Seeger: The Power of Song*, which won an Emmy Award.

As one of the principal organizers and its artistic director, she co-founded the Great Hudson River Revival, the annual fundraiser for the Clearwater organization that helped to clean up the Hudson River in New York.

Clearly the fame that followed her legendary husband never bothered her. As she told his biographer, David King Dunway, in *How Can I Keep From Singing: Pete Seeger*: "I hate it when people romanticize him. He's like anybody good at his craft, like a good bulldozer operator."

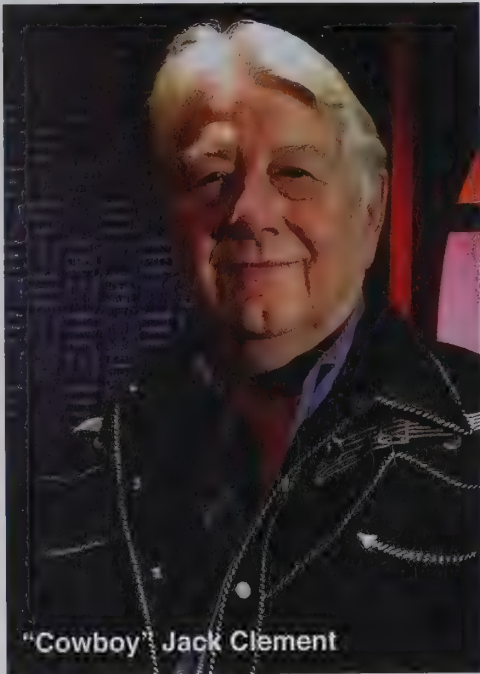
"Cowboy" Jack Clement 1931 - 2013

Visionary producer, engineer, celebrated songwriter and arranger, Cowboy Jack Clement started his career recording the likes of Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis and Charlie Rich for Sam Phillips at his legendary Sun Studios in Memphis, TN. He would go on to work with artists as diverse as U2, Louis Armstrong and Townes Van Zandt, write some of country music's most memorable hits, and champion its "outlaw" movement. Clement died at his Nashville home Aug. 8 after a long bout with liver cancer. He was 82, writes Roddy Campbell.

Clement was born April 5, 1931, in Memphis, TN. He grew up fascinated with the guitar and the Dobro but didn't consider a career in music until he returned home from a stint in the United States Marines in the early 1950s. He approached music from a business perspective, enrolling at Memphis State University. On graduating, he and a friend, Slim Wallace, bought a Magnacorder recording machine and set up Fernwood Records. They recorded Billy Lee Riley's *Rock with me Baby* b/w *Trouble Bound* and played it for Sam Phillips. He recognized talent and hired Clement at \$60 per week in 1956.

At Sun, he famously was the only one on hand when Jerry Lee Lewis initially turned up boasting he could play piano like Chet Atkins played guitar. Amused, Clement, set up a recording date and taped Lewis covering Ray Price's *Crazy Arms*. Phillips was delighted and released it as a single, which sold 300,000 copies. Clement also had the foresight to run tapes at a spontaneous Sun singalong that included Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Johnny Cash—a recording now known as *The Million Dollar Quartet*.

While Clement was fired from Sun in 1959—the details are murky—he would return to produce elements of U2's *Rattle And*



"Cowboy" Jack Clement

Hum in 1988. He would then go to work for Chet Atkins in Nashville before relocating to Beaumont, TX, in 1961, and form the publishing company Hall-Clement Music. In Texas, he produced the million-selling hit *Patches* by Dickey Lee and convinced

George Jones to record *She Thinks I Still Care*. It went on to No. 1 on the U.S. country charts. Meanwhile, he would write such hits for Cash as *Guess Things Happen That Way* and *Ballad of a Teenage Queen* and later arrange his massive hit *Ring of Fire*.

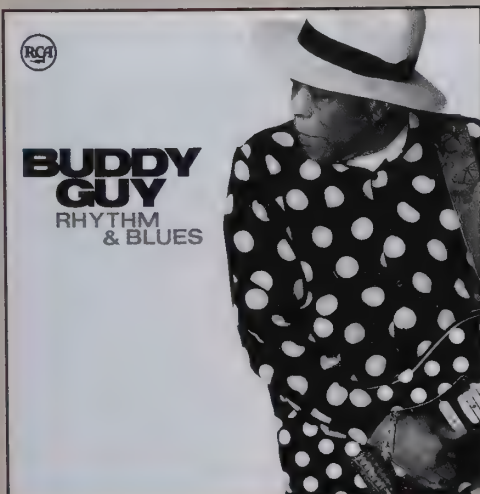
In 1965, Clement returned to Nashville and financed a demo by then-unknown Charley Pride and persuaded Atkins to sign him to RCA. Clement also wrote Pride's first two hits, *Just Between You and Me* and *I Know One*, and produced Pride's first 13 albums. Clement would also launch the career of Don Williams and persuade Kris Kristofferson to pursue his dreams as a songwriter. And when Columbia Records blocked independent producers access to its Nashville studio in 1970, Clement build his own—the first 16-track recording facility in Nashville. There he would record *Dreaming My Dreams*—Waylon Jennings's finest hour—in 1975.

Around the same time, Clement would provide unlimited access to his studio to a young struggling producer by the name of Jim Rooney. He would produce landmark

recordings for the likes of Nanci Griffith, John Prine and Iris DeMent. On April 10, it was announced Clement would be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Tragically, he died before he could make his acceptance speech.

Penguin Eggs also notes other passings in brief: **James Gray**, the former keyboard player with Canadian country-roots-rockers Blue Rodeo, died of a heart attack Aug. 5. He was 52. **"TModel" Ford**, the hard-living blues singer who taught himself to play guitar when he was 58 years old, died at his home in Greenville, MS. It is thought that he was 93. Multi-instrumentalist **Nick Keir**, a member of the Scottish group The McCalmans and an award-winning songwriter, died June 2. He was 60. **Bagui Bouga**, a co-founder of Niger's Etran Finatawa, died Aug. 2, after suffering a severe asthma attack. He was 32.

Win Buddy Guy's Rhythm & Blues CD



Now here's a real treat: a new double disc from one of *the* greatest guitar trailblazers the blues has ever produced. Eric Clapton calls him his favourite blues axeman and Mark Knopfler would probably tell you the same thing. Buddy Guy first earned a serious reputation for his high-energy instrumental virtuosity in Chicago's nightclubs. A series of critically acclaimed albums for the famed Chess label followed. Yet it took until the '90s before he

developed into the celebrated figure he is today. Sony Music Canada has now generously provided us with six copies of *Rhythm & Blues*. To win one, answer the following questions correctly and email them to penguineggs@shaw.ca. Put Buddy Guy as the subject. Please don't forget to include a mailing address and a proper contact name in order for us to forward your disc. Failure to do so will result in disqualification. Good luck.

Q 1: What celebrated blues songwriter and bass player produced Buddy Guy's first single, *Sit And Cry*?

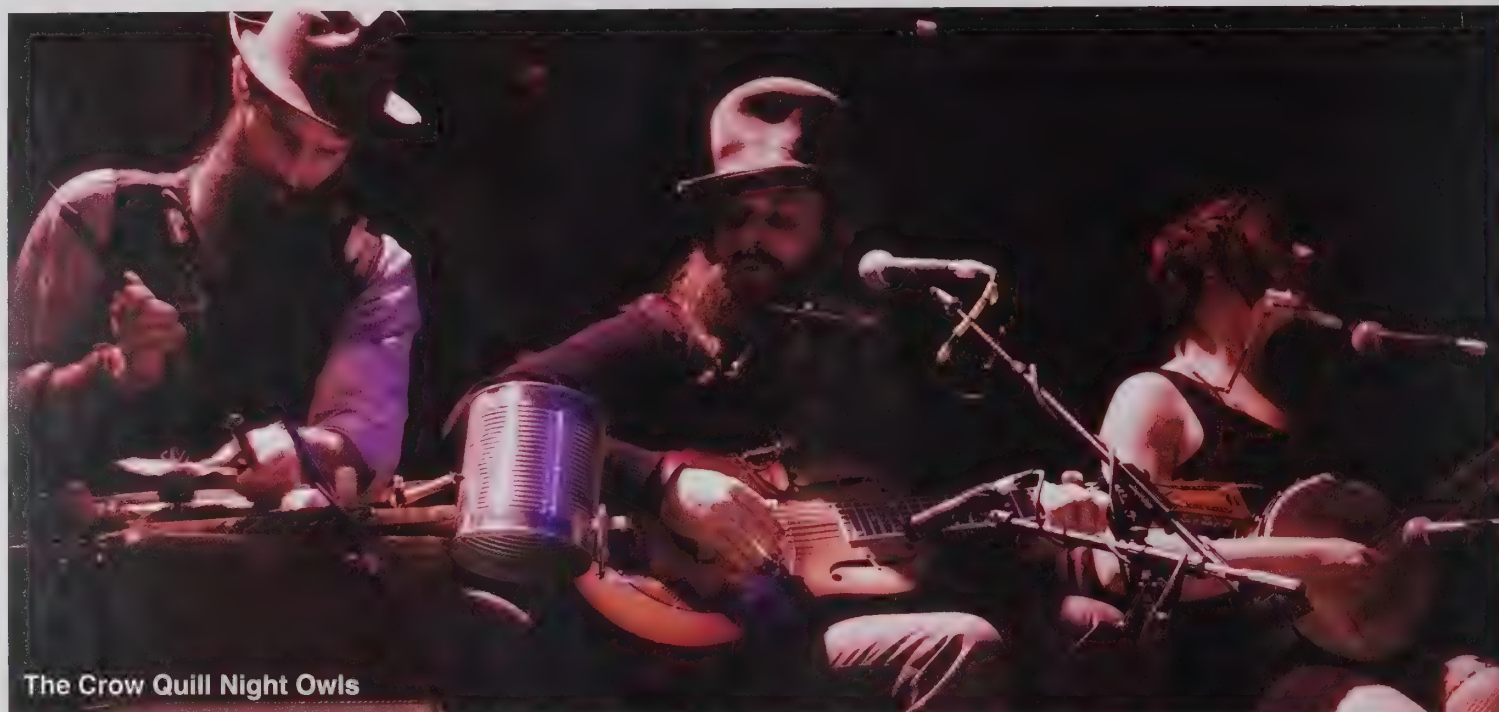
Q 2: Name what is widely considered Buddy Guy's comeback album for Silvertone Records.

Q 3: Name the harmonica player Buddy Guy toured and recorded with for most of the '70s.

Answers to the Ruth Moody's *These Wilder Things* contest are: Q1: *Privateering*. Q2: Voltaire. Q3: The Bills.

And the winners are: Amanda Hodgson, Spruce Grove, AB; Seamus Sullivan, Vancouver, BC; Deana Ridder, Rocky Mountain

House, AB; Jennie Raymond, Surrey, B.C.; Bill Forsyth, Halifax, NS; and Corrine Watson, Kelowna, BC.



The Crow Quill Night Owls

The Crow Quill Night Owls

The Crow Quill Night Owls can make time stand still—or slip into reverse. When the trio stepped onto the main stage at the Mission Folk Music Festival in July and started to perform vintage-style jug band music, the B.C. audience found itself transported to old, weird America, circa 1930.

On the right Windy City Alex, in a blue dress with little white spots, sang like a junkyard angel and played tenor banjo, banjolele and kazoo.

The beardo in the middle, her partner Kit (Stymee) Stovepipe—with top hat, ring through his nose, and a voice that suggested fine-grade sandpaper marinated in moonshine—also drew on a small menagerie of instruments: resophonic guitar, harmonica, washboard and also kazoo.

On the left stood his sister, Baylin Adaheer, wearing thick gloves on a hot evening, pulling on the single string of her washtub bass like she was plucking feathers from a fat turkey's rump. She sang backup and, yes, she also blew a kazoo sometimes.

While there's no lack of humour and riff-raffy flair in the Crow Quill Night Owls presentation, the trio from Port Townsend, WA, has great respect both for the performers of yore and their songs. "We play old music we learned from 78-rpm recordings of the '20s and '30s," says Kit. "It's basically jug band music, a mix of all different

kinds of styles and genres—pop, jazz, blues and hillbilly folk. They kind of rolled them all together.

"There's so much I love about it—there's a technical appeal to a lot of the old ragtime stuff, and I really like how it's on the upbeat, it's dance music and not over-saturated with emotion like a lot of music today. I feel it was a golden age of music all across the board. Everything I hear from that time—old Irish records, calypso, country, French-Canadian music, and the rest—they all have the same power."

"People really knew how to write a song back then," adds Alex. "They put ideas and feelings in really simple forms, and they weren't afraid to be sentimental."

Alex has her own romantic tale of seeing Kit for the first time, performing with a similarly oriented band at the Oregon Country Fair nine years ago. "I went up afterwards to say thank you and when he turned around I ran away! I got this sick feeling in my stomach 'cause I kind of fell in love with him then."

They met a year later, and in 2007 formed the CQNO. With four albums under its belt the band is about to migrate—well, maybe.

"We're putting our stuff in storage and heading for Asheville, North Carolina, for six months—for a number of reasons but mainly because we have a lot of friends and collaborators on the East Coast and it's harder to tour here in the Northwest, where everything's so spread out. We need to ex-

pand the places we go and play, and our car hasn't been able to go over big mountain passes. It's an experiment. After six months we'll figure out what to do next."

— By Tony Montague

Brett Wildeman

Vancouver-born Brett Wildeman moved to B.C.'s picturesque and tranquil Sunshine Coast when he was a young lad, and there he started taking guitar lessons and played with a local Celtic ensemble, Coast String Fiddlers. He also met several other musicians, like James Law, who engineered and played drums most excellently on his new CD *Mother Earth*.

After high school he moved away to attend university in Victoria and in Wales. "I studied geography and political science. I think the subject matter definitely leached into the lyrical content of my songwriting."

His return to the Sunshine Coast a year ago to live in Roberts Creek was another source of inspiration, as was his three-week solo cycling trip, where he spent his time exploring the West Coast's scenery and doing a fair bit of introspective contemplating.

"The writing is dark and reflective," he tells me during our phone interview. "The song *Untitled* I wrote when I first came back to the coast. It was an overwhelming experience ... I had a very different perspective after living elsewhere. Coming back to the place you grew up in—you

reflect on what home meant to you growing up and where you are at now. The whole *Mother Earth* idea was this dichotomy—it was influenced by family but also by the Earth, as in the planet we live on. *Foreign Affairs* is about the pipeline the prime minister is trying to force across the province. *Brooks Alberta* looks at both the scenario of consumerism in the 21st century and the food industry. That definitely falls on the ‘earth’ side of the album.”

It’s not all gloom and doom, however. There’s happy memories there, too, like the ones that inspired the line “*Unforgettable times in unpronounceable places*”.

“I lived in Aberystwyth in Wales and it was such a great memorable time but with my international student pals we’d think we have a good handle on the Welsh place names but we were totally out to lunch!”

The music is sonically sparse and there’s a brooding sensibility in the playing which gives the CD a unique and interesting character. “We recorded it in three and a half days, the whole album, so that might have influenced the sparseness. When you have a studio full of gear it is sometimes tempting to get carried away with all that’s available. We recorded it all live off the floor with no click track.”

Strangely enough, it would never have happened if it hadn’t been for his wonky shoulder. “After high school I put my guitar down and stopped playing. Then I

dislocated my shoulder eight times in five years so I couldn’t do any of the physical activities I was doing, like mountain biking or soccer. That induced me to start playing music again and I have been plugging away on music full time ever since.”

If you take some time to listen to *Mother Earth*, then I’m sure you will be as glad as I am that that’s the way things have turned out.

— By Tim Readman

Scott Cook

For Scott Cook, the act of self-expression takes a circuitous route through music and travel. Each inspires the other to uncover what he calls “the source of the art”.

His mailing address may fall in Edmonton, AB, but as it turns out Cook has lived out of his van for about six years now, criss-crossing North America on his way from one gig to another. And for six years before that he was teaching kindergarten in Taiwan while he developed his skills as a singer/songwriter on the side.

The songs have trickled through on four solo albums now starting with his 2007 debut *Long Way To Wander* (recorded before he left Taiwan; the rest are made in Edmonton). The new disc *One More Time Around* took him back to the basics with a spare sound that highlights his articulate fingerpicking guitar skills and warm vocal tones with the unobtrusive backing of a few musical friends (he can also play clawhammer banjo, ukelele, and mbira).

Check Cook’s liner notes for some fresh observations on the nature of copyright and ownership. His taste for social or political comment comes through in the songs with a nice balance between stories from personal experience and a philosophical world view. It all points to something larger.

“I feel that we’re at a pretty critical juncture because we could destroy ourselves within our grandchildren’s lifetime or maybe sooner unless we find a different way. The way the whole system is set up—especially the nature of publicly traded corporations as entities that exist solely to maximize profits—is pretty well rigged towards our self-destruction.”

For Cook, politics of the personal and the universal are one and the same.

“That’s kind of what the whole record is about, hope or despair. Every song seems to



Scott Cook

be about that in some way, sometimes on that larger level, sometimes on a personal level.”

It’s not entirely surprising that this West Vermont-born, prairie-raised troubadour is the son of a preacher with a degree in philosophy, no specific religious affiliations, and a serious concern for the plight of the planet.

After taking up guitar in his teens he wound up in a punk band by high school, before the recordings of Greg Brown inspired him to seek out his own career as a songwriter. Brown’s tune *The Poet Game* is the only cover track on *One More Time Around*. Cook says he’s especially impressed by Brown’s ear for “what women have to say to men”.

That album’s elaborate booklet (complete with song chords) hints at further influences with quotes from Walt Whitman, Gertrude Stein and Kahlil Gibran (his website links to Noam Chomsky and Martin Luther King). Cook also painted the album’s lovely cover art.

He wants to tap into the more physical side of music making next time around with an album of original Caribbean dance grooves. But before that Cook was setting plans for more travels, nothing less than a half-year trip around the world with a few gigs along the way. We look forward to the musical insights that he brings back.

— By Roger Levesque



Brett Wildeman



Rachelle Van Zanten

Rachelle Van Zanten

There are myriad meanings to be found in the title of Rachelle van Zanten's latest album but one sticks out ahead of the rest.

The sombre, unblinking title track of *Oh Mother* pays homage to van Zanten's mother, Diane, who passed away in 2012 from cancer, less than a year after van Zanten became a mother herself. Diane was an integral part of van Zanten's career; when the singer/songwriter was touring through Europe or India, Diane made sure that the business side was taken care of back home. If there was a local show she'd poster, sell merchandise at the gig, and feed the band.

"Now there's a void where she used to be and I'm painfully reminded of her absence every day," van Zanten says from her home in Francois Lake, BC. "I needed to find some way to pay tribute to her."

The songs came slowly for van Zanten, who took some time off from incessant touring and running her Rocker Girl motivational camp to devote full attention to her daughter, Charlie. This didn't mean that she had dried up creatively; the songs were still coming, it's just that she had no time to develop them. She also had a daughter that

brook no argument when demanding her mother's presence.

"Every time I went to write, Charlie would yell, 'No, Mom, e-i-o, e-i-o,'" she wryly recalls. "That's her favourite song."

In order to spur herself on she went ahead and booked studio time, with multi-instrumentalist and producer Joby Baker providing bass and drums. The two had three weeks in which to complete the 11 songs on *Oh Mother*, so van Zanten used whatever brief moments she could snatch from Charlie's naps to tie up loose ends.

"I wrote like a mad woman," she laughs. "These were songs that were important to me, so I had to meditate on many of them. The last one was *Beach Fire*, and I had a minute in which to finish up the lyrics, so I closed my eyes and got it done. Then I immediately went in the vocal booth and sang it."

The passing of her mother suffuses the album but *Oh Mother* is also entwined with the joy of new motherhood and frustration with, as van Zanten puts it, "the lousy way that we all treat our (mutual) mother, Earth, how we let her get pummelled left and right for money."

The most evident track on *Oh Mother* to address this is *I Fight For Life*, which

got its start as a speech van Zanten wrote for the joint review panel investigating the building of the Northern Gateway pipeline. In Burns Valley, BC, where she lives, this is a topic of considerable interest, and rightfully so; if approved, the pipeline would pump half a million barrels of diluted bitumen every day from Alberta through to the Pacific coast. It's a hot topic for many in Alberta and B.C., and van Zanten is pleased with how people have responded.

"When I played Grande Prairie recently something like 60 per cent of the audience were oil people. They didn't respond with hostility, which was great. I got a chance to explain myself and then I got some emails about how they felt. It encouraged conversation, and that's what I wanted."

Her daughter makes an appearance in the line "*Charlie loves the rain that falls down through the fits of thunder*" from *I Fight For Life*, and now she's making a pronounced appearance in the interview, singing "e-i, e-i-o" and impishly pushing in the speaker cones of van Zanten's mixing speakers. It's time to wrap things up.

"I've never fallen so in love with someone before like I have with Charlie," van Zanten finishes. "That's why I'm writing the songs that I'm writing now. Once I became a mom I got it, I understood why people go beyond to protect their child, to make sure that the earth is still there for them. I don't want Charlie to grow up on synthetic pills; I want her to have a future."

— By Tom Murray

Greg Spatz

When Greg Spatz was six, he decided that all he wanted to do was play violin and write stories after his parents read Tolkien aloud while a Mendelssohn concerto was playing in the background.

"The Mendelssohn concerto was the same thing as *The Hobbit* to me," Spatz says. "I had no idea what it took to play the violin or write stuff. I didn't understand you have two different things."

He eventually learned they are different but that hasn't prevented him from having successful careers as both a musician and a novelist.

Spatz is best known in the world of bluegrass as the fiddle player with John

The Big Buzz

Reischman and the Jaybirds, and he plays bouzouki and fiddle with his fellow fiddler wife, Caridwen Irvine-Spatz, in a multi-ethnic project called the Mighty Squirrel.

He also manages to hold down a day job teaching writing at the University of Eastern Washington, and has three acclaimed novels under his belt as well as collections of short stories that have appeared in such publications as *The New Yorker* and the *New England Review*.

In recent months he has released a solo album, *Fiddler's Dream*, a mix of Celtic and bluegrass tunes which has the same title as his second novel, as well as *Inukshuk*, a novel about a teenager who is obsessed with the Franklin Expedition.

It's almost like having two identities. He is known as Gregory in the literary world, and Greg among pickers, and he acknowledges that it can be jarring going straight from a writer's workshop to a bluegrass festival.

But the link in his brain between the two that started in childhood has persisted. "To me it feels natural to think of a tune or a song and find a connection with something I'm writing. They're always going together—they're different but complementary."

For instance, *Fiddler's Dream* is also the title of his second novel about a young man in search of his bluegrass musician father and who also has dreams of becoming one of Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys. Meanwhile, on the disc he includes the haunting traditional waltz *Lady Franklin's Dream*.

Spatz, who grew up in New England, started performing as a teenager in his parents' folk group, the Spatz Family Band. Along the way he discovered bluegrass and Irish music, spending time in Ireland and eventually taking a year off school to join the San Francisco-based bluegrass band High Country, which is still going.

He went to grad school and took temporary positions at several universities, juggling music and academia. Sometimes music had to take a back seat but along the way he took a year off to play music full time in Nashville. Eventually he got a teaching job in Spokane and settled there in the late '90s.

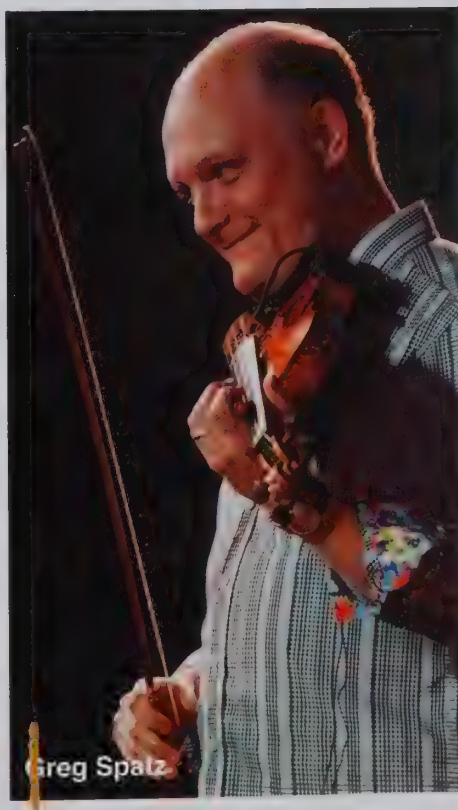
Travelling the road west also led to his spot in Reischman's band. Reischman was putting a band together to tour his iconic 1998 instrumental disc *Up In the Woods* and recruited Spatz through their mutual musical friend, Jim Nunally, who also became a Jaybird.

He still has a passion for Irish music, which has been rejuvenated through Caridwen, who is a renowned Celtic fiddler and singer in the Pacific Northwest. He learned to play bouzouki overnight after her backup player encountered a medical emergency, and his skill on that instrument can be heard on the new disc.

The cliché about writers writing about what they know is especially true in Spatz's case. It's not just Monroe or violins (his next novel will be about the world of violin fraud) but the Franklin Expedition. Spatz's great-grandmother was a Franklin, and she was the great-niece of John Franklin, who led the disastrous attempt to find the Northwest Passage.

"My grandfather traced the family tree (in England) and cousins there are certain of it but they won't speak his name because of the association with bad luck." Hopefully the man who is blessed with many talents won't be subject to that curse.

— By Mike Sadava



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Lucy Ward

This Little Light of Mine...

With the release of her majestic second album, *Single Flame*, Lucy Ward has evolved into a bold, striking, mature songwriter. She's a cross between June Tabor and Nico, reckons a hyperbolic Colin Irwin.

Lucy Ward is a veritable force of nature. An exhausting bundle of energy, she greets you with a fund of anecdotes, laughing uproariously, all convivial smiles and chummy asides and chatting with engaging effervescence in a pronounced Derbyshire accent about the extraordinary two years in which she's emerged from a standing start to become one of Britain's fastest rising young folk stars.

"Oh, Canada... I had such a good time there," she says, recalling her showcase appearances at this year's Folk Alliance in Toronto. "Hard work, mind, and a mad, mad experience, but so much fun and I loved it. I also discovered the real beauty of the power nap."

Lucy has become adept at showcases ("you usually only get three songs and I spend more time figuring out which three songs to do than I do working out a full

concert set") and vividly recalls the Association of Festival Organisers conference in Nottingham a couple of years ago when she stood next to the noisy coffee machine grappling for the attention of excitable delegates noisily intent on putting the world to rights. It was a seemingly thankless spot but, never one to be cowed by awkward situations, Lucy cheerily battled her way through it with relentless humour and charm and she ended up with a string of bookings which effectively triggered the launch of her burgeoning career.

You won't necessarily know if her hair will be blue, blonde, black or yellow when she turns up but stick Lucy Ward in front of an audience and she will make them smile, laugh, sing along and dance home in the firm belief that they've just discovered a new best mate.

At 23, she's a natural performer whose quick rapport with audiences has taken her a long way; but it would be a mistake to assume she's merely a funny girl with a gung-ho chorus and a ready quip. While her 2011 debut album *Adelphi Has To Fly* was likeable—likeable enough anyway to help her win the Horizon best newcomer

gong at the 2012 BBC Folk Awards—it was essentially a gigging album, a calling card that included well-trodden folk favourites like *Maids When You're Young* and Mike Waterson's *A Stitch In Time*.

However, a couple of her own songs—notably the complex, involving title track—suggested she had much, much more in her armoury with the capacity to develop in a very different way. That impression was swiftly cemented with the release of a single (remember those?) titled *For The Dead Men* that, with its pointed lyrics and anthemic chorus might, in another age, be termed a protest song (remember those?)

Yet even this didn't prepare anyone for the full provocative majesty of her second album *Single Flame*. It includes a couple of traditional songs but primarily marks Lucy's emergence as a writer and singer of striking maturity and bravery on a deep and sometimes dark record confronting some tough issues with guile, sensitivity and some genuinely inventive arrangements. Even more astonishingly her voice appears to have moved to another level, at times hitting a low enough range that even persuaded one hyperbolic reviewer (OK, it was me) to describe it as a cross between June Tabor and Nico.

"Yes, my voice has changed quite a lot in the last couple of years," she says, while crediting (blaming?) hotshot young producer Stu Hanna, already famous for his unconventional way of getting the best out of artists. "He'd say things like, 'Sing it like you're cold' then it's, 'Now sing it like you're boiling hot' and then, 'Now do it like you're about to die'. It's good to explore your voice and mine has changed quite a bit over the last couple of years. And Stu was great. I had a lot of ideas for the album but I can't read music, I'm not classically trained or anything and I don't know the right terminology for anything. But Stu listened to my mad ideas and made them real."

Determined to prove she was substantially more than the girl-with-a-guitar who made *Adelphi Has To Fly*, she was still nervous that this bold new approach would alienate the fans who had supported her from the beginning, but decided to go for it anyway ("you only get one chance to make a second album"). She needn't have worried. The reaction to *Single Flame* has been unequivocally enthusiastic and transported

Tubthumping

her to a new level.

The first track, *I Cannot Say, I Will Not Speak*, is especially surprising, starkly opening with a growly reference to old school peace and love princess Melanie Safka (“we sung the songs of Safka/ Candles In the Rain / but the air is so much thinner now / and all that’s left is single flame”). It goes on to reflect how the idealism of the 1960s was lost, while making a call to her own generation to pick up the baton. What, you wonder, does a 23-year-old know about Melanie Safka and the other singer/songwriters of that generation? Quite a lot it seems.

“My mom and dad are passionate music lovers and Melanie was one of the go-to artists of their youth ... and subsequently my youth, too. I just love the way that album opens with her whispering the words—it carries real impact. Not many records grip me from the first bar, but that’s one of them. *I Cannot Say, I Will Not Speak* is about those old protest singers holding on to their faith and us needing to recapture some of the hope and belief of those times. There may have been a naiveté about them but now we are blocked by our cynicism. I don’t know why, but protest seems to have become a dirty word. People don’t like being told what to do. Folksingers are put in a box and protest singers are put in a box within a box. Not that I think I’m a protest singer, it’s about opening up discussion.”

She remains hopelessly devoted to her parents’ records collection—Bowie, The Beatles, Leonard Cohen and especially Joni Mitchell. *The Blue* album. On vinyl, naturally. “I play it constantly, I know every bit of it. I can’t get my head out of the music of that period of the ’60s and ’70s. I love old soul and Motown, too. It’s all about lyrics.”

With its hypnotic chorus (“stand up, take to the streets, they can’t ignore us if we all choose to speak”), *For The Dead Men* also sounds like a rallying cry. “That was a reaction to everything I was seeing around me. The end of the National Health Service, farewell to welfare, all the cuts while millions of pounds were being spent on Lady Thatcher’s funeral and all I kept seeing was apathy ... people saying, ‘What does it matter if I don’t go on that march?’.”

The track had unexpected results after

Billy Bragg heard it on the radio and tweeted his admiration, attracting the interest of filmmaker Kim Hopkins (director of, among other things, the Woody Guthrie documentary *Man In The Sand*) who subsequently gave her a week to put together the music for a new film *Folies à Deux – Madness Made Of Two* with Hungarian Gypsy fiddle player Barnabas Balázs, who didn’t speak a word of English. “That was, erm, difficult,” she laughs, “but it was a great experience ... and it’s an excellent film.”

Perhaps the most startling track on her new album is *The Consequence*, written in response to the ‘honour killing’ of British Pakistani teenager Shafiea Ahmed by her own parents in 2003. It’s a delicate topic for any songwriter to tackle and Lucy is anxious that the song—all the bleaker for its unaccompanied setting—be seen as a wider view of family violence.

“The song was an emotional response to something I watched on the news. It’s a heavy subject but it shouldn’t be taboo—it’s in the public domain and the song doesn’t trivialize the theme. A lot of the old ballads are about young men and women who have terrible fates and this is a modern take on that form. It’s difficult to sing. We had the launch of the album in a church in London and it felt very haunting singing it there.”

With a full band that she hopes to work with more in future, that show enabled her to indulge her childhood dreams of being Debbie Harry, indulged to the full on a stomping arrangement (“a great big glam folk beast” as she puts it) of the traditional song *Marching Through The Green Grass*.

Lucy Ward as the Debbie Harry of folk? There are worse notions...



Lucy Ward



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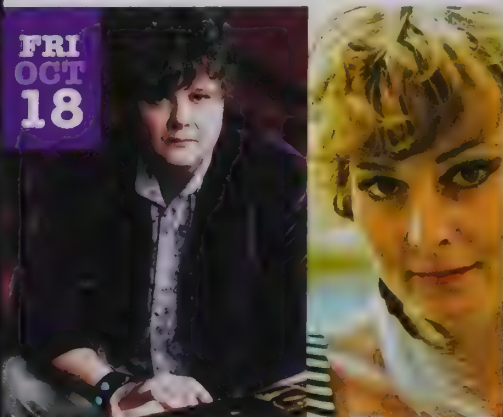
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A Gallant Affair

Teenage traditional musicians Ten Strings & A Goat Skin from Rustico, PEI, partially practised on Skype before recording their impressive new bilingual album *Corbeau*. Sandy MacDonald supplies the anecdotes.

For generations, East Coast fiddlers thrived in a sort of cultural vacuum, isolated from change. The insular nature of living in coastal Canada ensured the music that arrived with their ancestors from across the sea stayed pure and undiluted.

That's all changed. The airwaves, record stores and Internet are abuzz with vibrant music from every corner of the globe.

Fiddler Rowen Gallant is all ears, open to embracing the gorgeous global music that informs his virtuoso traditional playing.

Gallant is the powerhouse fiddler and vocalist with Ten Strings & a Goat Skin, a fast-emerging trio of teenaged musicians from the north shore of Prince Edward Island. Rounded out by his younger brother, Caleb (percussion and vocals) and Jesse Périard (guitar), the trio effortlessly melds the traditional Irish and Francophone music of their upbringing with leading-edge Celtic innovators.

"We're contemporary enough that we're accessible to a variety of different crowds, including young people," explains Rowen, over the clatter of a busy downtown Halifax coffee shop. "But we're not 'out there' enough to be disregarded by older crowds who are into more traditional music. So that gives us a wide variety of shows we can play—from bar shows to soft-seaters."

That ability to engage a wide audience has kept the group on the road, plays marquee gigs at the Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival, P.E.I.'s Festival of Small Halls, and concerts in Maine and New Hampshire.

The Gallant brothers grew up in Rustico, PEI, listening to "fairly straight traditional music," explains Rowen, 19. With the Irish roots of the Thompsons on their mother's side and the Francophone Gallants on the other, there was plenty of music to go around. Their uncle, Lennie Gallant, is one of the East Coast's most beloved artists and a strong influence.



"A couple of years ago, we all fell in love with this new trad music coming out of the old world, particularly Ireland and Scotland." The brothers fell under the spell of neo-Celtic bands including Flook, Solas, and Vishten.

"When we started really digging into it, the music had a different feel," explains younger brother Caleb, 17, who plays percussion and sings. "We started to see the full potential of what trad music can be, and not be limited to what has been traditionally done."

The trio recently released *Corbeau*, a polished 12-track collection of original songs, sparkling Irish and Acadian fiddle sets, a couple of traditional vocal pieces and some exotic instrumentals drawing deeper from the Middle East than the East Coast.

"It's kinda all over the map, which is what we are!" says Caleb.

The three young musicians first shared a stage five years ago at a local charity event to paint the local church in Rustico. Jesse, a classmate of Rowen's, had picked up a few tunes on the acoustic guitar and the boys practiced hard for a week to get ready.

"It was pretty rough and tumble," says Rowen. "But as we've continued playing, our sound has evolved into something we really enjoy."

It was after those early gigs that a friend driving the boys home suggested Ten Strings and a Goat Skin as a band name. "Being 13 or 14, we thought that was pretty cool," says Caleb. "It's very literal if a little childish—it's a good laugh."

Rowen is a triple threat artist—he's a fine, bold singer who understands the nuance of delivering a song, a promising songwriter and is one of the best young fiddlers in the East Coast, with a unique sound wrung out of his Irish and Acadian heritage on top of a decade of classical violin training.

"It is great to have that classical foundation because it teaches the foundations and increases your technical ability. I think the (technical) training opens up our creative process a little bit more."

That technical foundation allows Rowen the dexterity to shift from the percussive Irish jigs to a set of Middle Eastern instrumentals he calls the *Byzantine Reels*.

Caleb started at eight years old playing

bodhran so he could sit in with the Irish sessions in Charlottetown. Soon after, he was also marching in a local pipe band with a snare drum on his hip. Recently he's picked up the cajon, a box-like percussion instrument that can approximate the various tone from a full kit.

The band's debut 2011 bilingual album, *TRI*, was awarded Music PEI's 2012 Roots Traditional Recording of the Year and was nominated for the 2012 ECMA Roots Traditional Group Recording of the Year.

"Since that first album, we've been building up songs that are more contemporary," says Caleb. "It had always been on the back of our minds to get this stuff recorded, the material that was more representative of what we do live."

The band finally pulled those tunes together for the new album *Corbeau*, recorded at Halifax's Sonic Temple with Uncle Lennie producing. The trio worked closely with Lennie in preparing the material, even arranging a Skype rehearsal, though "that didn't really go so well," laughs Caleb.

With the tunes selected and rehearsed for the recording, the trio crossed the waters and settled into the Halifax studio for four intense days. They quickly laid down bed tracks, then overdubbed a few flourishes to fatten up the sound, including vocals, bouzouki and accordion.

"One of the standout tracks is a co-write from Lennie and Rowen called *The Night They Moved the House*, a rollicking recounting of a strange bit of family lore.

"We were sitting at my Aunt Anne's house, one night in Rustico having supper, and we were talking about this family legend I'd never heard. The story is true, from what we can tell."

Joel LaBelle had duped a local woman, an ancestor of the Gallants, into deeding over her property upon the death of her husband. But the night before he was to come and take possession of the house, the good folks of Rustico banded together with sleighs and logs and helped move her house across the frozen bay to another property.

The song marks Rowen's first writing

venture, a fine first crack at the craft that his Uncle Lennie has been acclaimed for more than two decades.

Brother Caleb wouldn't be outdone and contributes *The Uniform*, a gorgeous original song about a young soldier, mortally wounded and contemplating his end.

The trio collaborated on a set of instrumental pieces called *Kick The Crow* to really provide the rounded snapshot of the band's sound. They deliver a beautifully haunting version of *Vive La Rose* and wrap the disc with a rousing staggering jab at the old sea shanty *Bully in the Alley*.

"Celtic music comes in waves of popularity," says Rowen. "It follows what's going on in the motherland." Though the last great Celtic wave rolled through the East Coast 10 years ago, there is always a solid core of fans dedicated to the music.

"I'd bet it's just a matter of time till that interest comes across again and people get excited by this music."

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Love Hurts

Broken hearts lead to rather good albums, as Cara Luft's *Darlingford* attests. Its diverse inspiration draws from the Everly Brothers to traditional English folk songs. Pat Langston makes the introductions.

It's one thing to write and record an album about the end of a relationship when the hurt is still fresh. In that case, the experience informs the way you compose and sing each song. But how do you approach those songs once you've put the pain behind you?

Cara Luft's *Darlingford*, released in 2012, was about the sudden collapse of a relationship two years previously. Her best solo effort since leaving the Wailin' Jennys, the much-admired Canadian folk trio she co-founded in 2004, *Darlingford* tracks the post-breakup ebb and flow of her personal emotions and limns some of her wider concerns.

Not surprisingly, she says her perspective on many of those songs has evolved.

It's *Gonna Be Alright*, for example, was written about her determination to get on with life despite a badly bruised heart. Then, earlier this summer, "I was touring in England when I heard about the flooding in southern Alberta, and I'm from Calgary. So when I started singing the song I kept thinking about Calgary, even though that's not what I wrote it about. But I just kept thinking, 'This is really a song about reminding ourselves that when we go through these things we really are going to be OK'."

What she the writer/performer was doing, in other words, is exactly what we the audience do: interpret songs from our own shifting perspective.

Luft, 39, says she knew she had to write a breakup album. That, of course, is what artists do: capture, whether in a song or a painting or a novel, the most intense moments of life by going to that part of the psyche where we observe ourselves objectively even as we're wracked by emotion.

She got some assistance in the objective department from Guelph composer/producer Lewis Melville, who receives co-writing credits on half of the album including *It's*



Cara Luft

Gonna Be Alright.

"I didn't want to go the route of wallowing in misery and navel-gazing," says Luft. "I thought it would be a good idea to write with someone who could help me write about the personal element but also the universal element. So I brought Lewis on board."

The Lewis touch shows up on songs like *Bye Bye Love*. In fact, he wrote a good chunk of it after Luft got stalled on the lyrics.

Anyone who's loved and lost connects immediately with the tune's conflicted content. On the one hand, the protagonist knows she has to forge ahead and put the pain behind her. On the other hand, she's not yet there and it's not really certain that she believes she'll ever get there.

Think of it as a kind of sequel to the old Everly Brothers hit of the same name in which those two fellows are simply downward bound with not even an inkling that they might one day crawl out of the break-up hole.

Luft's song, which includes Jesse Zubot on violin and Keri Latimer on harmony vocals, is musically textured in keeping with the layers of emotion and rationality in the lyrics.

It also contains the line "*I can see how love can make you blind*". The line is

rooted in the cliché about love being blind but here takes on fresh life because, like the song itself, it evokes two realities.

"You want to be blinded by love because then you have no cares, it's like an innocence," Luft, now with the benefit of hindsight, says. "But then when you get stung, you're like, 'Oh, fuck! I was really blind'. Life is full of yin and yang."

Writers, herself included, often create as a way of gaining perspective and objectivity about a deeply personal event, says Luft. The awareness that she's writing in part to gain perspective is not something she had in her twenties: "It comes with experience and learning."

The songs on *Darlingford*—the title references the small Manitoba community where many of the tracks were recorded in an old church—don't all spring from the singer's fractured love life.

The Ploughboy and the Cockney, for example, is a traditional tune as is *He Moved Through the Fair* ("I was raised by folkies," says Luft). *Portland Town*, by Derroll Adams, mourns the waste of war. *Dallaire* is about the soul-destroying experiences of Canadian general, and now senator, Romeo Dallaire when he commanded the United Nations' ineffectual peacekeeping efforts during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Luft sent a copy of the album to Dallaire.

SO SAY WE ALL TOUR 201

DATE	VENUE	CITY	DATE	VENUE	CITY
Sept 19	St. Paul's United Church	Perth, Ontario	Oct 19	TransAlta Arts Barns	Edmonton, Alberta
Sept 21	The Blacksheep Inn	Wakefield, Quebec	Oct 20	Nancy Appleby Theatre	Athabasca, Alberta
Sept 22	Acoustic Grill	Picton, Ontario	Oct 23	Canmore Legion	Canmore, Alberta
Sept 26	Piggery Theatre	North Hatley, Quebec	Oct 25 - 26	Dream Café	Penticon, British Columbia
Sept 27	The Neat Coffee Shop	Burnstown, Ontario	Oct 27	St. James Hall	Vancouver, British Columbia
Sept 28	Market Hall Performing Arts Centre	Peterborough, Ontario	Oct 28	Southend Grooveyard	Saltspring Island, BC
Oct 4-5	Hugh's Room	Toronto, Ontario	Oct 29 -30	Hermann's Jazz Club	Victoria, British Columbia
Oct 6	London Music Club	London, Ontario	Nov 1	Creekside Theatre	Winfield, British Columbia
Oct 8	Princess Cinemas	Waterloo, Ontario	Nov 3	Medalta	Medicine Hat, Alberta
Oct 9	Hamilton Place Studio	Hamilton, Ontario	Nov 5 - Nov 15	US Tour Dates	--
Oct 10	Espanola Royal Canadian Legion	Espanola, Ontario	Nov 20	Le Petit Campus	Montreal, Quebec
Oct 11	Old Town Hall	Richards Landing, Ontario	Nov 23	Marigold Cultural Centre	Truro, Nova Scotia
Oct 12	Murillo Community Centre	Murillo, Ontario	Nov 24	Zion Lutheran Church	Lunenburg, Nova Scotia
Oct 14	Pappy's Café	Wabigoon, Ontario	Nov 26-27	The Company House	Halifax, Nova Scotia
Oct 15	The Park Theatre	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Nov 28	DeCoste Entertainment Centre	Pictou, Nova Scotia
Oct 16	The Exchange	Regina, Saskatchewan	Nov 29	Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre	Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia
Oct 17	The Bassment	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	Nov 30	Harmony House	Hunter River, PEI
Oct 18	RiverPark Church	Calgary, Alberta	Dec 1	Greenbank Community Centre	Greenbank, Ontario



* David will be touring with (L-R) Chris Coole, Darren McMullen, and Mark Westberg

www.davidfrancey.com

She heard nothing for a while but then received a letter.

"He thanked me. He didn't go into a lot of detail but he was very gracious."

Life, as both Dallaire and Luft know, goes on, and we all find our own ways of urging it forward.

Not surprisingly, music is central to Luft's urging. *House on Fire*, one of the co-writes with Melville, details how she stayed with her pal Miriam after the breakup. Friendship helped see her through the crisis, but one suspects that her truest companion, the one she knew she could always rely on, was music. "So I went to Miriam's," she sings in the last line, "just me and my banjo."

It's been three years, and the nosy in us all wants to know whether Luft and love are again on speaking terms. "I'm not ready for a new relationship," she says. Then, after a pause, she adds, "But still, I would like to be loved again."

She's also thinking ahead to how she tours. "I've got to have a breather!" she says, referring to her chock-a-block summer and fall schedule.

"I love touring but I need to slow down. I'm wondering how I can tour so I'm in a place more than one night."

With stability looking ever more appealing, it's not surprising to hear that she's preparing to write her next album and that, "I want to write it around the theme of home. I'm at the stage in life where you want to have a permanent home."

Trad' Hunters

RéVeillons! have foraged deep into Quebec's past for obscure traditional music and songs. *À la chasse pour chaser*, their latest recording, takes a more common yet unique route. Yves Bernard reckons they are truly one of a kind.

They are true folk music purists. They are also independent, in every sense of the word. They steer clear of the more polished-sounding trad, and all four of the group's members are unique in what they do: here is a singer whose voice is frozen in time, a violinist who comes from the dance tradition, a



jigging dance-calling percussionist and a guitarist with an earthy sound, which is rooted in tradition. This past summer, they released their third album, *À la chasse pour chaser* (or *On the Chase*), a more up-beat and less sombre effort than their previous *Malbrough n'est pas mort*.

"We noticed that the material on *Malbrough* didn't go over so well on outdoor stages. We kept those songs for our indoor concerts, whereas during festivals, we would play numbers from our first album, which was more upbeat," Jean-François Berthiaume, the group's percussionist, jigger and dance caller tells us. On *Malbrough n'est pas mort*, RéVeillons! sang lullabies about human suffering, talked in-depth about war, death, politics and the Jew's harp, but also played biting reels and swinging sad songs. Their new album, *À la chasse pour chaser* is different; it's funnier and slightly more "popular", without being "poppier". "Why the title? Because somewhere along the line, we realized that we were always looking to uncover a jewel of a song, to dust it off and to present it in our own way. But it's also interesting to take a well-known song like *Pour boire, il faut vendre* and to make it our own," reflects David Berthiaume, the group's singer and

Jean-François' brother.

They are indeed on the hunt, going directly from point "a" to point "b" without worrying too much about adding sophisticated arrangements. "We don't want our music to be too refined. My favourite is still Isidore Soucy, alone with his feet and violin. It's pretty raw. Traditional music is not always harmonious, and I like it when it's a bit off. That's why we clash a bit. We bring out a certain aggressiveness that is present in the tradition."

David's voice is at least as typical to the style as Gervais Lessard's from *Le Rêve du Diable*, Philippe Jetté's from *Belzébuth* or Antoine Gauthier's from *Les Chauffeurs à Pieds*. He got it from his grandfather, who he knew very little. It's like a voice that's frozen in the past, and few can remain indifferent to it. In Quebec, people either like it or they don't, but that seems to be different in the United States. "Americans seem to be more used to voices that reflect strong personalities, thanks to people like Kenny Rogers, Dylan and various other folk artists," argues Jean-François.

JF comes from the world of dance. As a child, he wanted to do breakdancing, like... Michael Jackson. Then his father found him a folk dance troupe that did Russian dancing. The coach told them, "It should

Tubthumping

do the trick, and you'll learn acrobatics that will help you in breakdancing". That's how he started, in the Pieds légers de Laval, and he ended up using jiggling as an instrument, before transposing jig rhythms to drums.

JF is also well known as a highly original dance caller. He gets it from his uncle Paul André: "I like to invent dance formations as I call. Instead of saying, "Meet your partner, promenade!" like the others, I'll add, "Take it away" and I'll rap. It's an old way of calling. The Americans did that is well, they would sing along to the melody while giving precise directions. I like to invent poetry while I'm doing it," he tells us.

The guys in RéVeillons! play for dances every chance they get: "There are a lot less people who dance compared to people who listen to traditional music. That's why we always make a point of using dance as much as possible in our concerts," adds David. In this regard, violinist Richard Forest is the real thing. He has uncles who are musicians in Saint-Gabriel-de-Brandon and he was made to go all night, like a real

marathon player who can play for hours. He's from the school of swing and has learned his classics, from Isidore Soucy to Joe Bouchard to Philippe Bruneau, without the need for sheet music.

He started playing violin later in life, around the age of twenty, because he thought that is was an instrument for old people. He learned quickly and is now considered to be one of the best players of his generation. Stéphanie Lépine, who is herself an excellent violinist, passed by Jean-François' during the interview and confirmed this for us: "His style is straightforward and smooth, his playing is authentic with a dynamic swing. There's something captivating and reassuring about his playing. It's raw!". He can make his instrument sound old-timey while playing "crooked" tunes, but can also lightly stroke the strings or play rhythmically while vigorously attacking reels. And as he's doing so, the group's new guitarist André Gagné provides the bass notes, doubles the others and energetically accompanies.

"[André] has that typical force, kind of like the Beaudry brothers. For those people, there's no point in playing 12,000 chords. You play one, but you play the right one."

His style is rawer than that of his predecessor Marc Maziade, who is currently leading the group Maz. "André has a lot of rhythm and is closer to the world of tradition. It's hard to explain, but he definitely has a sound that comes from Saint-Côme in the Lanaudière region. He has that typical force, kind of like the Beaudry brothers. For those people, there's no point in playing 12,000 chords. You play one, but you play the right one," says JF.

Simplicity reigns on *À la chasse pour chaser*. A reel follows a polka, a call-and-response song becomes very percussive, Isidore Soucy is played in the traditional manner and an atmospheric waltz is played ever so lightly. It's music that goes straight to the point.

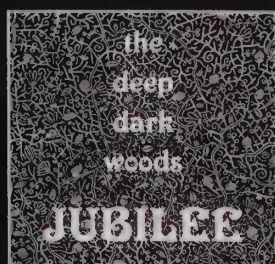
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Ties That Bind

Don Brownrigg grew up playing at family kitchen parties in Newfoundland before moving to Nova Scotia and becoming a favourite on Halifax's open stage circuit. Sandy MacDonald previews Brownrigg's smartly crafted new disc, *It Takes All Kinds*.

The Codroy Valley is a remote sweep of paradise, scraped out of the extreme southwest tip of Newfoundland. Sheltered in the lee of the Long Range Mountains along the Codroy River, the valley is a patchwork of rolling farmland, sandy beaches and scrubby woodland.

Singer/songwriter Don Brownrigg grew up in the tiny Codroy community of Upper Ferry, and was baptized in the wash of old fiddle and accordion tunes. Electricity only arrived in the Codroy in 1962, so the Valley people came to cherish homemade music in cosy kitchens.

"There was a nice intersection of musicians I was born into," says Brownrigg. His mother's people played Celtic tunes on the fiddle while his father's brothers were songwriters. "It was a kitchen party (family) ... singing and playing whatever fun songs people wanted to hear around the table."

He learned to play piano to accompany the family sessions, polishing the under-appreciated skills of making the singers and fiddlers sound good.

"I had a really great piano teacher who knew I was stronger at playing by ear," he says. "So we did the Conservatory (lessons) but we also had a side thing going. She'd play whatever song I wanted to learn into a tape recorder. I'd take that home (to learn by ear), rather than learning from the sheet music."

The quiet, windswept beauty of the valley provided a safe and nurturing place to grow up. But it couldn't promise any kind of economic future for an ambitious young man.

"We didn't have any big town near us. My father always worked away. He was a miner, two weeks on and two weeks off. So it was often just my mother with my brother and me when he couldn't be there."

So like countless young people in rural Canada, Brownrigg left home after finish-



Don Brownrigg

ing high school. He headed for Halifax to study kinesiology at Dalhousie University.

"There was nothing there for us to do, sadly. I loved it there and didn't want to leave. It was sad for us as 18 year-olds to say goodbye to this amazing place. We were so sure of everything, and we literally knew everybody."

He may have left the Codroy behind but the ingrained music has served him well. The young musician is one of the burgeoning talents on the East Coast.

Brownrigg is about to release his second album, *It Takes All Kinds* (To Make This world, I find). The album is a subdued 10-song collection of smartly crafted songs, beautifully framed in an understated production.

He's left the old fiddle and accordion tunes behind in the Codroy, staking out a more contemporary folk-pop sound. The new album is built around Brownrigg's relaxed and captivating voice, over a bed of acoustic piano, guitars and laid-back drumming. The tunes then begin to swirl with lush arrangements that bring the deceptively quiet songs to life.

The first single from the album, *Sweet Dream Sleeper*, is getting some serious CBC airplay ahead of the official release in late October 2013.

Now based in Halifax, Brownrigg is part of a flourishing community of folk-root-

ed East Coast musicians, including Rose Cousins, Jenn Grant, Ben Caplan, Mo Kenney and Heather Green, making waves with their smart songwriting.

Slipping easily into the local music scene after arriving from Newfoundland, Brownrigg felt right at home. Many of the East Coast artists he idolized were based in Halifax, and the tight community is supportive of one another. Back in 2004, Halifax had a very bustling open stage scene. A keen player could perform at a different club every night of the week and find an applauding audience for original music.

"From the start I felt a part of that community. As someone who was shy and never centre stage, it was special to find peers going through the same things and helping with my confidence."

Brownrigg was a quick favourite on the open stages, with his deep baritone voice, charismatic story telling, polished keyboard playing and easy manner. That led to forming small bands, putting on modest self-promoted shows, and touring. He played keyboards on the road with Tanya Davis, Down with the Butterfly, Jenn Grant and other Halifax artists. In 2007, Brownrigg released his debut CD *Wandersongs*.

"I worked really hard on *Wandersongs* but I wasn't ready," he says. "I was a side musician who was doing a lot of open mics and tiny shows. I didn't know how to nav-

Tubthumping



Don Brownrigg

igate having a record out and then it ended up doing really well.”

The album garnered some national buzz for Brownrigg, a record deal with weewerk records, and a trip to Europe for prime showcase appearances.

The positive response was a surprise to the shy musician from little Upper Ferry.

“I think I fell amongst the laurels of *Wandersongs* too much,” confesses Brownrigg. “I wasn’t challenging myself enough to be writing constantly. I learned from that

experience that it all starts with writing songs and you have to challenge yourself and know yourself.”

So gathering what he’d learned, he embarked on a more thoughtful path for his new album, six years after the debut.

“I was half of the mind to produce this new record myself and half of the mind to get a producer. I really wanted another person with an objective production mind.”

He found the right producer in his friend Daniel Ledwell, keyboard player with Nova Scotia-based pop group In-Flight Safety and a frequent producer of other artists, including singer Jenn Grant, Quiet Parade, and Zac Crouse.

“Danny was making some interesting music and taking chances with singer/songwriters that I liked. I didn’t want to make just a folk record—I wanted to be a little risky. Maybe I find myself boring sometimes.”

Brownrigg laid down basic tracks on acoustic guitar, then added little keyboard melodies over top, which would morph into a horn part

or a backup vocal or a Wurlitzer line.

“Danny brought a confident production style that I really needed. I can be a bit wishy-washy about stuff and he was willing to take a lot of chances.”

The recording was done at Ledwell’s studio in the home he shares with his wife, Jenn Grant, in Halifax’s inner city. In addition to producing, engineering and mixing the album, Ledwell played trumpet, trombone, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, electric bass, and percussion. Brownrigg added vocals, acoustic guitar, piano, keyboards, and accordion. Rose Cousins and Jenn Grant added vocals, Zac Crouse anchored it all on bass, and local indie drummer hero Benn Ross played the kit.

All in, it’s a relaxed affair, reflective of Brownrigg’s easy and grounded personality, bred in the Codroy Valley.

“I grew up in a really small beautiful part of Newfoundland,” says Brownrigg. “But it was tough as well.

“I hope some humbleness is still there in the music—with a little touch of grit.”

Jim Dorie



“Jim Dorie waited until middle age to start writing songs, and now he writes ‘em like someone who’s been doing it for decades.” Mike Sadava, Penguin Eggs

“Over the years, as a musician and producer I have heard a lot of music. My attention is caught when songs have integrity, good stories, strong melodies. Jim Dorie’s songs have all three.” Dan Rubin, Blue Island Records

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LAPD. From L to R: Donal Lunny, Andy Irvine, Paddy Glackin and Liam O' Flynn

Irish Heartbeats

They now tout a name as mad as a box of frogs, but Colin Irwin meets the men who pretty much redefined traditional Irish music through groundbreaking bands like Planxty, Bothy Band and Moving Hearts.

Don't be fooled: if you see a poster advertising LAPD it's unlikely to be a lecture on crime prevention from the Los Angeles Police Department. Far from it, the LAPD we are talking about is a collection of initials that combine to assemble the latest incarnation of four great legends of Irish music.

There's Liam O'Flynn, whose name comes almost surgically attached to the phrase "the world's greatest living uilleann piper" and has a remarkable CV that includes the names of Seamus Heaney, Kate Bush, Emmylou Harris and Mark Knopfler alongside anybody and everybody who's any good in Irish music and who continues to set breathtaking standards on his complex chosen instrument.

The 'A' stands for Andy Irvine, who

seemingly sold his soul to Woody Guthrie at some lonely Co. Dublin crossroads in his teens and has scarcely been off the road since, writing a plethora of magical songs that have starred in his solo career, while also playing a key role in any number of superb bands who've helped changed the landscape of Irish music—Sweeney's Men, Planxty, Patrick Street and Mozaik among them.

The 'P' is Paddy Glackin, founder member of the Bothy Band whose superlative fiddle playing is infused with the Donegal tradition and who went on to make the classic *Doublin'* album with Paddy Keenan before being diverted by a career on RTE radio.

And the 'D'? That can only be the sainted Donal Lunny, founder and driving bouzouki rhythm force behind three of the best-loved and most influential bands in Ireland—Planxty, Bothy Band and Moving Hearts—and an enviable track record producing and arranging a huge number of other significant releases from Sharon Shannon to Paul Brady, Sinéad O'Connor and Elvis Costello.

Their latest excursion came about when Lunny and Irvine started playing duo

gigs together and, wouldn't you know it, chanced upon Liam O'Flynn and Paddy Glackin also operating as a duo in the same orbit. One night they decided to merge the two duos just to see what happened.

When a seemingly effortless outpouring of sumptuous music ecstatically received by the audience happened, they decided to make a proper band of it and, yes, a supergroup was born. They have still to record an album (that's scheduled for next year) but they've already made a variety of prestigious appearances, including a memorable weekend this summer headlining England's Cambridge Folk Festival before flying home to Ireland to support Bruce Springsteen.

"A sprinkling of Andy's songs and a lot of great tunes," is Donal Lunny's pithy description of what they do. And what's your philosophy, Donal? "Not to take ourselves too seriously."

LAPD may not be groundbreaking but essentially these are the guys who sowed that ground in the first place and it's hard to improve on perfection. With three ex-members of Planxty in the lineup, it's hardly a surprise that the name of this most revered of all Irish groups is lovingly evoked. It

A vibrant photograph of a large outdoor music festival. In the foreground, a man in a hat and sunglasses stands at a keyboard on a stage, facing a massive, diverse crowd of people seated on the grass. Above the stage, a large black silhouette of a double bass is visible. The background features a line of green trees under a clear sky. Stage lights and rigging are visible at the top of the frame.

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just needs Christy Moore to be there to complete the circle but that's not likely to happen any time soon. "We talk on and off but Christy went his own way," says Donal. "He loves taking the corner whenever he likes and that's not really possible when you play with more than one other person and need to have discipline in the music and arrangements. He needs the arrangements to be free enough for him to feel free and he performs so much better like that."

As it is, LAPD's emotional connection with their audience is very natural and genuinely affecting, especially whenever O'Flynn launches his pipes in anger.

The old adage states that it takes 21 years to be a piper—seven years learning, seven years practising, seven years playing—"and after that you never want to see a set of pipes again," says Liam, who initially learned from one of the great masters of the instrument, Leo Rowsome. It didn't quite take Liam 21 years but it wasn't too far short.

"The first time I heard the pipes I knew I wanted to play them," he says. "We lived an hour from Dublin and every Friday my father took me on his motorbike and sidecar to be taught by Leo Rowsome, who was a great piper, a great teacher and, perhaps most important of all, a brilliant pipe maker. That was the high point of the week for me. I was so lucky. It's a cantankerous enough instrument so it was ideal to have someone as good as him to look after the ins and outs of tuning reels and all that. With my first set of practice pipes Leo insisted I spend at least five years learning the technique of the chanter and when I got a full set he took the regulators away for a year and I just had the chanter and drones before he said I was ready to play the rest of it."

Further tutored later by two other piping greats, Seamus Ennis and Willie Clancy, the great watershed both for Liam and Irish music, in general, was when he was asked to join Andy Irvine and Donal Lunny playing on Christy Moore's 1972 album *Prosperous*—the catalyst for the formation of Planxty. It was unheard of at the time for a piper so grounded in traditional music to join a contemporary band, particularly one so influenced by rhythm, and Liam's addition gave Planxty instant credibility ... and the instrument a profile it had never

experienced before.

"I had huge musical curiosity and the notion of playing with the three lads really appealed and fascinated me," says O'Flynn. "I like the challenge of playing different types of music and for people outside the tradition it has a unique voice and they want a part of it. The instrument is now thriving."

Planxty's first gig was supporting Donovan in Galway and their impact was instant. "About halfway through I got this feeling there was a fight going on somewhere in the hall," says Andy Irvine. "I'd seen fights in dance halls at gigs before—it would start in the middle and there would suddenly be this explosion as it spread and that's what it felt like. But then I looked at Donal and he was smiling and I realized it wasn't a fight, we were just tearing the place apart. People were going mad with joy. We had a manager called Des Kelly who was chuckling with glee at the end and had a bottle of vodka in his pocket and I grabbed it off him and started drinking and it had to be wrestled off me. We knew then we had something special—it was the right moment for us."

One of folk music's great characters, Irvine has certainly adhered to the philosophy of his most famous song, *Never Tire Of The Road*, self-deprecatingly telling stories of his early Woody Guthrie obsession. "I first heard Woody when I was 16 and was immediately hooked. The first

time I put the stylus on his record I was gone. So I sent him a letter. I didn't know where he lived so I just sent it to "WOODY GUTHRIE, USA". It came back to me about a month later. But around that time I met Rambling Jack Elliott and hung out with him and he told me Woody was in the hospital so I wrote to him there. When they were knocking the hospital down they found all my letters and put them in the archive and when I read them, they were all about playing football and stuff like that—Woody couldn't have had a clue what I was on about. They were a little bit boasting, too—I told him I played for Everton!

"But I practised and practised Woody's guitar style and his Oklahoma accent and at one point I thought I had it off so well it was a shame to be sitting on my bed singing to myself. So I went to towns where nobody knew me and put on this Oklahoma accent and started playing. They'd ask me where I was from and I'd say, 'Ah'm from Oklahoma' and when they asked my name I'd say, 'Folks call me Woody'. Then, with great reluctance I reverted to being Andy Irvine and in 1965 I joined Sweeney's Men and set off in this old VW van. We had a couple of gigs and would drop into pubs and pass round the hat. When we got back to Dublin we rented a house together. There was no work that winter and it was freezing cold and we were starving ... that was when I realized we had become professional musicians..."



Planxty. From L to R: Donal Lunny, Andy Irvine, Liam O'Flynn and Christy Moore

Photo by: Michelle Kay



Bonnie Prince Billie

Dawson City Music Festival

There are strange things done in the midnight sun, apparently. Like Maghan Campbell drinking a cocktail laced with a severed toe. She rode the Top of The World Highway to attend the best hooley near the Arctic Circle.

Its astonishing reputation stirred my curiosity. For years I've heard performers and punters alike make big, brash statements: "There is nothing quite like the Dawson City Music Festival". From the moment on landing in Whitehorse reading *Cyclist Chased By Wolf* on the front of the *Yukon News*, to my first night of never-ending daylight, I knew their assertions had merit.

Google a map of Yukon Territory. You won't see the tiny town of Dawson City (pop. 1,319), until you zoom in about 10 times. Then you realize just how far north, and just how isolated, you've found yourself. It's the exact opposite feeling of claustrophobia.

And that's the beautiful thing about Dawson: it's really, really hard to get to. Throughout the weekend I met folks who had journeyed from all over the country.

Some catapulted onto Dawson's little bandaid of an airstrip in ludicrously tiny prop planes. Some navigated north through the territory's waterways, making the four- to 16-day trek from Carmacks or Whitehorse in canoes up the swollen Yukon River. Many northerners drove for more than 20 hours, across the Arctic Circle and into Dawson on the gravel Dempster Highway—multiple spare tires and bear spray tucked in their trunks.

My friend and I drove up through Alaska, and unavoidably destroyed our rental car on the state's majestic, yet hellish, Top of the World Highway. When we putted back in to the rental agency, bumper duct-taped on, and undercarriage completely stripped, the agency didn't charge us for anything. They must see that kind of thing a lot.

In other words, the journey to Dawson is an integral part of the festival experience. Those at this event absolutely wanted to be there. And the weekend was defined by a sense of unpretentiousness and openness, and a warm, squishy feeling of community. It was really, really nice. Those attending the shows were willing to dance, they were willing to sing, and they were willing to

sit in rapt silence if the loveliness of the performance called for it.

Gracing the main stage on both Saturday and Sunday nights was "the North's favourite band", according to CBC Yellowknife's Allison Devereaux. I was literally dragged from the beer garden into the tent to dance as Iqaluit's The Jerry Can's bounced into *Mamaqtuq*, which singer Andrew Morrison explained means "it's delicious!". The song is about seal meat stew, and had the audience bounding about in a frenzy. The Jerry Cans lived up to their reputation. I don't say this lightly, but they were the perfect festival party band. A completely unique act: young, energetic, country swingers donning seal skin skirts and bow ties, they sing in Inuktitut. Their lineup includes an accordion-wielding throat singer (Nancy Mike), a fiddle, and a funky reggae-inspired rhythm section. The Jerry Cans fully embrace their northern roots and make infectiously fun music. Totally refreshing!

On the Saturday afternoon, at a workshop titled *Gimme That Old Time Religion*, in St. Paul's Anglican Church—an intimate little frontier-mission-style building constructed in 1902—The Sojourners and Samantha Martin raised the hair on the collective audience's forearms. Samantha had blues-rocked the crap out of the main stage audience the night before, but that afternoon, growling in tandem with The Sojourners' gorgeous gospel harmonies, she was almost too much awesome. As the two groups were belting out a heartbroken version of *Wade in the Water*, I self-consciously noticed I was crying at the dang thing! Fortunately I wasn't the only one reaching for my hanky. I looked around, and all of us were on our feet, transported from isolation on top of the world to a baptist church deep in the south. We left the church with stunned looks on our faces. We needed a drink.

The Palace Grand Theatre, in itself, was one of the highlights of the festival. A restored wooden theatre from the 1890s gold rush era, it was just ... well ... wow! The building made any show special. I just felt incredibly lucky being there. Women of the World Take Over! featuring Fanny Bloom and Dawn McCarthy, amongst others, totally charmed. The Sojourners blew me away for a second time, and pop violinist Hannah Epperson bewitched her audience

completely under the immortal spell of the Palace Grand.

The festival takes place on Tr'ondëk Hwëch'land, and the organizers felt very respectful of that. In conjunction with the festival, the beautiful Dänojà Zho (Long Time Ago House) cultural centre hosted some awesome events, including the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Hän singers, a multi-generation group singing Tr'ondëk traditional songs.

Of course at any festival there are highs and lows. Toronto's Zeus was really hyped-up, and they turned out OK. 'Nough said. The festival's big headliners, Bonnie Prince Billie and Dawn McCarthy, chose to sit in a circle with their band on the mainstage, sharing one microphone. Of course, this meant you couldn't hear their lovely harmonies anywhere past the fifth or sixth row. This in turn lead to a few snide comments from Mr. Prince Billie (Will Oldham) directed towards the chatters in the crowd (who, to be fair, couldn't hear a thing), and an overall negative vibe. The show would have been lovely at the Palace Grand or St. Paul's church, but the cavernous main stage tent swallowed them whole. Oldham also chose not to show up for one of his workshop performances, giving this gal a



Photo by: Meghan Campbell

Dawson City from The Dome

bad impression.

Sunday night main stage headliner Daniel Romano of Welland, ON, was a no-show. Fortunately Dawson City locals Drea and the Naysayers stepped up, and kicked my ass with their brand of bombastic folk they have self-dubbed 'folk you'. Well let me tell ya, Drea and her lot certainly folked me pretty hard, with the lady in question howling in her bathing suit and fishnets and flogging her guitar as if it had some serious repenting to do.

More surreal than anything was the experience of a festival under the midnight sun. Stumbling from venue to venue, or from venue to raucous after-party at The Pit (an incredible dive bar that defies description), or from The Pit back to the motel, was made novel by checking one's watch. The sun over Dawson dipped like a little spoon, but never once during the festival did it set.

Dawson City itself nestles between the Yukon River and a mountain known as 'the Dome', played the perfect host. There were some delectable food options. Reindeer, elk, bison, arctic char, Alaskan salmon, and local Yukon chickens were all consumed by this gourmand at some point during the festival. Mamaqtuq! Veggies were available at the farmers market on Saturday, but lordy, were few and far between in the north. As far as watering holes in town, it was nearly impossible to be parched. In addition to the fantastically grimey Pit, one could imbibe at the former brothel, or while playing the slots and taking in some can-can dancing

at Diamond Tooth Gertie's, the restored gambling hall. Or you could choose to join the Sourtoe Cocktail club, where you purchase a high-proof shot, and a salty old miner drops a mummified severed toe into your drink. You only join the club if the toe touches your lips. It touched mine. I have the certificate to prove it. There are strange things done in the midnight sun, indeed.

Clearly a huge part of the community, it seemed like at least half the tiny town was volunteering or participating in the festival in some way. This fantastic weekend is a sincere gift from those who stay in Dawson all year round, to whomever will make the journey up into the north's open arms. I'm already planning on how I'm going to get there next year. Hopefully it doesn't involve getting chased by a wolf.



Photo by: Michelle Kay

Samantha Martin

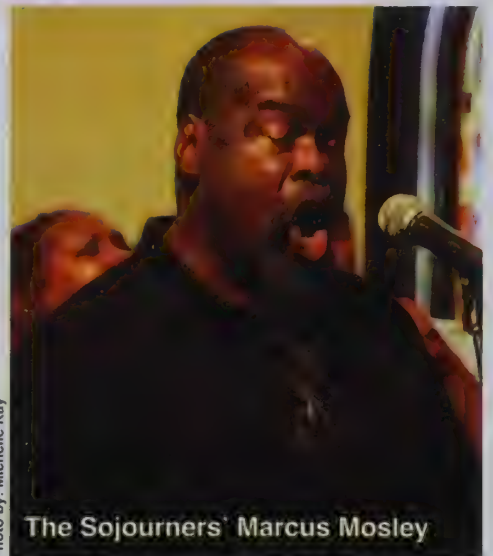


Photo by: Michelle Kay

The Sojourners' Marcus Mosley

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Golden Slumbers

Award-winning songwriter Chloe Albert overcame a severe bout of writer's block to create her imposing new release, *Dream Catcher*. Alan Kellogg uncovers the details.

In her infectious song *Joy*, which begins *Dream Catcher*, Chloe Albert's latest CD, the narrator implores: "Come on take me with you / For the uphill climb / You and I / Let's do it together".

Whatever the actual motivation, that's a sentiment listeners and the woman herself could easily apply to Albert's calling surfing the vicissitudes of the musician's life. On the listener side, I—and an increasing coterie of admirers—can attest that any journey complemented by the Albert catalogue will produce rewards. The Edmonton-based singer/songwriter is on to something. Something good.

Over a luncheon salad and local pint, the 30-year-old endures the standard biographical queries. Born and raised in the Alberta capital with an "interesting" stop-off in the rural town of Tofield, AB, Albert is the daughter of a dad from the small maritime city of Rimouski, QC, her mother a Vancouver native.

It was a "very musical" household with her mom's acoustic guitar always in easy reach, and the likes of Hendrix, Raitt and The Beatles on the family box, essential elements of "a giant record collection". Piano plinking began at age five, guitar and percussion followed.

Apparently there wasn't a huge degree of tortured hand-wringing over a calling. Off she was, to MacEwan University's (nee GMCC) music program in the vocal department. "It gave us a sense of professionalism, and I found this great, supportive community of musical friends, which has been invaluable. And it also opened my eyes to jazz and world music."

The problem was that she "hardly performed, that part didn't come naturally".

And so, the traditional route (slog) of the professional musician began, with the usual stops of office and waitressing jobs, the labyrinthine cosmos of grant applications and eventually, a self-generated CD, 2008's *Dedicated State*. That impressive



debut won Albert an Emerging Artist of the Year award at the Canadian Folk Music Awards and serious support from CBC and CKUA networks along with the admiration of lights such as Blue Rodeo's Jim Cuddy. Strong showings in songwriting contests at Nashville's East Side Music Festival and the Calgary Folk Festival provided encouragement, as did her work at Edmonton's venerable Blue Chair Café, long a kindly incubator of promising talent.

And then there was a troubled, dogged two-year period of protracted writer's block over '09 and 2010. "I was at sea, no doubt about it. It seemed everyone around me was unhappy, confused, searching. So after getting into some new-agey stuff, I began to feel like society had not taught us to listen to ourselves, to listen to our inner voice. And things began to open up..."

Indeed, Albert pronounces the last couple of years as a time of "coming alive," and the inspiration for *Dream Catcher*. One might be forgiven for assuming the title, family name and album graphics might indicate First Nations or Métis roots, which is not the case. The last thing Albert would want anyone to take away was some sort of cultural appropriation. Without succumbing to preachiness, it's about spirit, shared spirit.

Although Ani DiFranco was an early inspiration and Albert—who currently plays

in three bands of diverse stripes—says her musical passions of late stretch from Sam Cooke and vintage soul to old country and, especially, blues. That said, she's not about to be compartmentalized about her own work. In fact, her canon to date (he said definitively...) roughly falls into the intersection of folk, country, and pop, with jazzy and bluesy highlights here and there. The strong album closer, *When the Night Fell*, might have been pitched to a Motown A&R operative years ago, for example.

For all of it, including Stew Kirkwood's tastefully unobtrusive production, the door-opener for Chloe Albert is her voice. It's a lovely, lustrous vocal instrument, light-ish and unforced without coming off cloying, and (you would think) accessible to most tastes without sinking to contrived commercial generics. Hey, the woman has great pipes, leave it at that.

Recording the new album was "insanely fun". Husband Matt Gerzymisch was one of the drummers on board and is part of the live band Albert is hoping to take out more often. As it happens, Albert allows that most of the work is at least partially informed by something personal. There are exceptions, such as *Across the Ocean*, a result of having been moved by Lawrence Hill's *Book of Negroes*. You reckon many, like this one, might be most affected by the plaintive cri de coeur of *Where Did I Go*

Wrong, a mature women's lament. "Well, I hope someday that I can restore / All the hopes and dreams I ignored."

Along the line, there have also been side projects, including several trips to Nashville. If there is one thing she's learned from those classic, manufactured co-writing "Music City" exercises, it's "that I don't enjoy that process at all. The songs that count come from the heart".

On the other hand, her participation in 2012's *The Engadine Sessions*, recorded in a Rocky Mountain lodge in Alberta's Spray Lakes Provincial Park, was a relative blast, as Albert joined a six-woman collaboration produced by Suzie Vinnick, a celebrated blueswomen with her own powerful vocal chops.

A tour of Atlantic Canada is planned for autumn 2013, the next step in the life of a working musician who has found her place.

'Grounded,' that old pop-psych chestnut, has no doubt passed its best-before date, and yet it seems to sum up Albert's worldview these days.

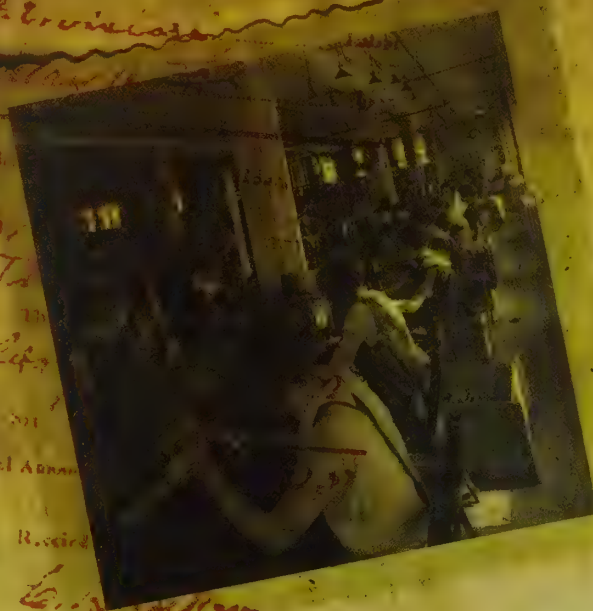
"I'm looking forward to continuing on this path of creativity/creating; it's one of the most rewarding things for me. It's amazing that after the first album of songs I genuinely worried that I might not be able to write any more good ones — and then ended up with a full album of songs I'm proud of and happy to share. I genuinely hold the philosophy of taking it one step at a time. And although I've sometimes felt as though I was walking blindfolded, that's what keeps things exciting for me, never knowing what will come next.

"I love to travel and perform, and have never felt more comfortable in my own skin and at peace with the path I've chosen as a musician. I guess that's ironic considering most people start out with all the gusto and confidence in the world and lose it as time goes by. For me it has been exactly the opposite. The more I go down the musician's road, the more there's no turning back..."



Photo: Albert

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Heart of Darkness

The aptly named The Civil Wars self-destructed in the wake of their Grammy Award-winning debut disc *Barton Hollow*. While no longer performing together, the duo's new self-titled recording appears destined for even greater acclaim. Jason Schneider steps beyond the tattle.

This past February, Joy Williams and John Paul White of The Civil Wars were all smiles at the Grammy Awards as the track they'd done with Taylor Swift and T Bone Burnett for *The Hunger Games* soundtrack, *Safe & Sound*, was named Best Song Written for Visual Media. The show of solidarity gave a glimmer of hope to fans still in shock over the duo's announcement three months earlier that they were taking an indefinite hiatus due to "internal discord and irreconcilable differences of ambition".

Williams and White have not appeared together since then, and as of now there are no signs when or if they will again. In the midst of that uncertainty has come The Civil Wars' self-titled second album, which, rather than being the afterthought it could have been, actually hits higher emotional peaks than its predecessor, *Barton Hollow*, and is easily in the running to top many best-of-2013 lists, Americana or otherwise.

While the pair has had a strictly professional partnership since meeting at a Nashville songwriting seminar in 2008—they each have their own families—the new album's foundation is the kind of tension anyone who's been in a serious relationship will immediately recognize. It's put Williams, for one, in the unenviable position of trying to explain to the media what's happened over the past year, although on the line from her home in Music City she understands that people are mostly just seeking the same answers she is.

"It's incredibly uncomfortable; I've shed many tears about it," Williams says. "As difficult as it was to take a hiatus, it was a mutual decision. It's really brought some clarity that I think I've needed, but what's a marvel to me is that the music was still a binding force between John Paul and me. Even out of that distress in some ways

we managed to create something really powerful and moving and emotional and honest—even more so I think than *Barton Hollow*."

Speculation on what led to The Civil Wars' split has been rampant, and Williams admits that having the chance to speak now will at least dispel some of the misinformation. What she can say definitively is that it wasn't a single reason or incident that set off the chain of events. Instead, she points to the mounting pressures of being a highly successful international touring act, coupled with normal interpersonal stress.

"My husband, who is our manager, was traveling on the road with us the whole time, and I think this hiatus has been needed even in the context of my marriage," Williams says. "On the professional side, when you work so closely with another person, as John Paul and I have—it's not like we had a band to bounce off of—that dynamic can be a lot to handle when you have a difference of opinion. There's a phrase I heard that best describes it for me: small hinges on a very large door."

The Civil Wars' rapid rise to fame over the past two years took a lot people by surprise, perhaps none more so than Williams and White themselves. Each had solo careers prior to meeting, with Williams's

reputation already established within the Christian music community. Their first recording, a free digital live album that was downloaded half a million times from their website, led to a four-song studio EP in 2009 produced by Charlie Peacock, who became their trusted sonic guide from then on. The EP's title track, *Poison & Wine*, turned up on several television shows over the coming year, and was re-recorded for *Barton Hollow*, released early in 2011.

Soon after, Taylor Swift tweeted her love of The Civil Wars and the rest of the year unfolded like a dream for the duo: opening for Adele and Emmylou Harris, appearing on every major talk show, and picking up Grammys for Best Folk Album and Best Country Duo/Group Performance. In late June 2012, Williams gave birth to her first child and by the fall the pair was well into recording the new album and gearing up to get back on the road. However, a week into a European tour with The Lumineers in November, the official word about the hiatus was posted.

"One of the assumptions is that I just couldn't handle having a baby and being on the road at the same time," Williams says. "But that's not the case. Like I said, my husband was traveling with us and we had a nanny, and I was enjoying the process



The Civil Wars

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of being a mom on the road. I look forward to going back out on the road again and showing [son] Miles more of the world. So, my ambition level didn't wane having a child, my ambition level actually grew."

Indeed, some of Williams's performances on *The Civil Wars* approach gut wrenching, such as the first single *The One That Got Away*, and *Devil's Backbone*, a spiritual cousin to Dolly Parton's *Jolene*. White asserts himself equally well on *I Had Me A Girl* and a simmering cover of Smashing Pumpkins' *Disarm*. The darkness at the heart of *The Civil Wars* sometimes threatens to overwhelm the entire album but it's part of the magic that Williams misses most when she and White write and perform together. While she has no idea what it will take for a reconciliation to occur, she remains hopeful that a desire to rekindle that magic will be the first step.

"I'm so proud of this project, and I don't want the back story of what John Paul and I are working through individually to overshadow the caliber of the music," Williams says. "If we had made a record that neither of us were proud of, we would not have put it out. It's an uncomfortable place to be but I keep saying this is an opportunity to grow wiser and kinder and become an even stronger band for going through this. It's not as if anything is determined at this time. A deep breath was needed."

Alice in Wonderland

Alice Gerrard, with her late partner Hazel Dickens, blazed a path for women in bluegrass and folk with their feminist anthems and union songs. Gerrard has now released her first new album in almost 10 years. J. Poet considers it her finest ever.

When her husband, Mike Seeger, introduced Alice Gerrard to Hazel Dickens, Alice wasn't looking for a career or a musical collaborator. "I'd been exposed to folk music during the short time I was in college at Antioch," says Gerrard. "I found a 78-rpm record by Texas Gladden, a woman singer from Virginia. It was *One Morning in May*, sung unaccompanied. It was so different from the stuff I was hearing from the commercial folk boom that it captivated me. Then somebody told me about the *Harry Smith Anthology* and that turned my life around. The high lonesome sound of old-time music and bluegrass resonated with me. It played into my own sense of melancholy. Soon after, I met Hazel, who was extremely influential on me."

Gerrard and Dickens hit it off and became known on the Washington, DC, folk scene with their low-key bluegrass music. It didn't occur to them that they were doing anything revolutionary, although they were probably the first all-woman group in bluegrass.

"We didn't have a clue," Gerrard says, laughing. "When we first played in New York and Boston, all these women were at the concert and we wondered what was going on. Then one time at a folk festival workshop, I sang my [protest]

song *Custom Made Woman Blues* and got a standing ovation. Having another woman to play and sing with, instead being with bluegrass guys who'd let the woman in the band step out and sing one Kitty Wells song, was unique. It wasn't until later that we understood the impact we had on people.

"It was an amazing time to live in Washington, DC. People from the South had moved up there looking for work. Me and other college-age, middle-class kids were attracted to the hillbilly music they played. There was a big cultural exchange going on. We'd go to parties and bars and listen to them play and try to play like them. Hazel and I used to go out to listen to the music. When someone suggested we should sing together, one thing led to another. We started playing concerts and making records and I found I had an accidental career in folk music."

Gerrard says she loves harmony singing and playing with other people more than playing solo. She's made albums with Mike Seeger, the Harmony Sisters, Strange Creek Singers, and the trio of Tom, Brad and Alice, with banjo player Tom Sauber and fiddler Brad Leftwich, but she's only made three solo albums since she started playing in the '60s. "I spend a lot of time documenting and collecting traditional music and I have a natural reluctance to be in the limelight, but every now and then I think it's time to do something of my own. A few years ago, I met Laurie Lewis at Merlefest. She told me she'd like to produce a CD of me singing my own songs. We chatted for 10 minutes, but left it there. Over the next few years, two other producers asked me to do a CD, so I went back to Laurie, since I thought we'd be on the same page as far as the music went and because she was the



Alice Gerrard

first one to ask me. It took another year to find the time to do it."

The result of their efforts is *Bittersweet*, Gerrard's first solo album in 10 years, and perhaps the finest record she's ever made. The songs are all Gerrard originals and cover the entire range of folk music, showing her many influences off to good effect. There's a stark, a cappella song of lost love called *Lonely*, *Payday at the Mill*; a Saturday night honky-tonk tune with a hint of ragtime in its rhythm; *Borderland*, a chilling exploration of childhood fears accompanied by haunted banjo, fiddle, and bowed bass; the humorous gospel blues of *Somebody Have Mercy on My Soul*; and most unexpectedly, a pure country tune, *Maybe This Time*. Her singing is still strong and soulful and she retains the range she's always had.

"I grew up listening to old-time, bluegrass and country music, so I think in those terms—verse, chorus, verse, break—as opposed to current pop terms. Still, it's fun to take your song and figure out the most effective arrangement you can find, based on a traditional format. When I write a song, I arrange it, but in this case, I wanted to leave a lot of it up to Laurie. Before we recorded, we talked about arrangement and breaks. The final results were a collaborative effort between Laurie and myself, with

ideas we incorporated from the musicians she brought in."

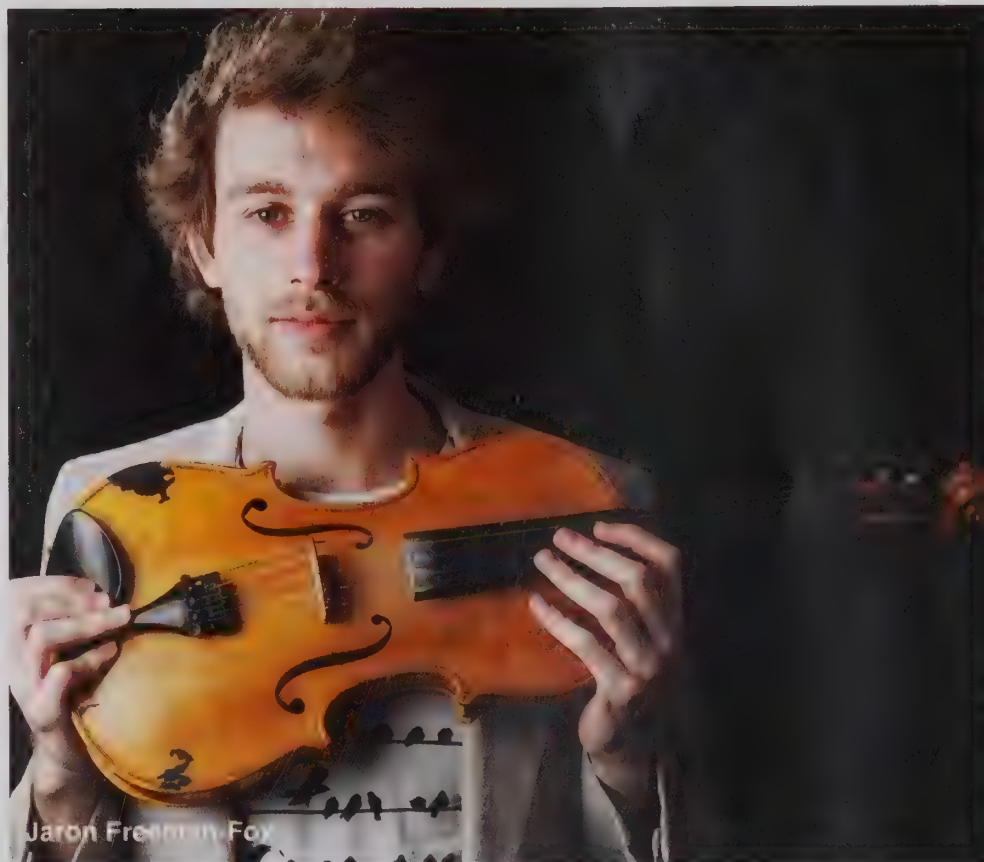
Bittersweet was recorded in Nashville and features guitarist Bryan Sutton, fiddler Stuart Duncan, Todd Phillips on upright bass, Rob Ickes on Dobro and Tom Rozum, who is also Laurie Lewis's musical partner, on mandolin.

"I assumed I'd be playing guitar on the album, but Laurie wanted me to focus on getting my voice out there. It's really fun when all you have to do is sing. That's why I like unaccompanied singing so much. I like to put myself into the song. With the really great players we had on this album, I was able to do that."

This autumn Gerrard will be touring the United States and Europe with fiddler Beverly Smith and she just finished another solo album for Tompkins Square Records with MC Taylor of Hiss Golden Messenger and Court and Spark fame. "Beverly and I just have a duo album we made in her home studio. I play banjo and sing and she plays fiddle. It'll be out in September. I made the album with MC Taylor while I was working on *Bittersweet*. I did traditional things, some country songs, some originals and one my grandson wrote. We don't have a name for it yet, but it'll be out in early 2014. I'm trying to break my record of 10 years between albums."



Laurie Lewis



Fox News

The late, great Oliver Schroer inspired Jaron Freeman-Fox's fearless approach to playing the violin. And how. Freeman-Fox finds inspiration in every nook and cranny on the musical map, from literally Delhi to Dublin. Hang on to your hats insists, Tony Montague.

Make sure your safety belt is tightly secured before you take out Jaron Freeman-Fox's album *The Opposite of Everything* for a spin. You're in for a wild ride, starting with the sampled voice of an auctioneer yammering at high speed before similarly breakneck fiddle and tablas take over. Speed limits be damned.

But don't think this hurtling vehicle is the kind that has no brakes and only one gear. Virtuoso violinist Freeman-Fox knows when to slow things down, as with the African-sounding a cappella voices that open the next cut *Pyrilte Pirate*.

The inspirations come from all over the map—jazz, pop, rock, classical and myriad forms of folk and world music. In lesser hands, mixing all these colours

would result in a suspicious shade of brown but Freeman-Fox uses them deftly, never allowing any to dominate for long. Playful and inventive, he's constantly on the move, creating kaleidoscopic music with bold, bright tones.

What's behind such a diversity of inspirations? "I think it's a product of growing up in B.C. where there isn't a specific tradition of fiddle, which as a child left me to embrace equally so many different genres," Freeman-Fox explains, or tries to.

"I grew up playing fiddle music—jigs and reels, and bluegrass—but at the same time there was a drum circle at every full moon. I played with way too many hand-drummers in Afrobeat groups, and since I was really young I was jamming with various types of Asian music."

Freeman-Fox, now based in Toronto, has done his fair share of studying. He went to India to learn its classical music, and was taught Western classical music by one of the most prestigious violinists in Vancouver, Marc Destrubé. He also became the apprentice, to use his own word, to the late Oliver Schroer, learning a fearless new approach to self-expression.

"It's impossible for me to say where my music ends and Oliver's begins. I've been playing his fiddles since I was 15, and even

his recording and production techniques are so integrated with what I do, because he passed so much of his gear to me. As a violinist I'm also influenced by L. Shankar [of jazz-rock-Indian music fusion band Shakti] and the different musicians who played snakeskin fiddle in [late Malian guitarist] Ali Farka Touré's band."

You can add to the list of inspirations pop-rock iconoclast Frank Zappa, Russian classical composer Igor Stravinsky, Irish-American fiddler Liz Carroll, jazz banjoist Bella Fleck, and controversial rapper Eminem. It's an eclectic collection.

Over the past decade Freeman-Fox and his fearless fiddling have been much in demand. He produced or played on dozens of albums, including those of Jayme Stone, Autorickshaw, and Delhi to Dublin, and released his own debut solo album *Manic Almanac: Slow Möbius* in 2010, the same year that he formed The Opposite of Everything—with violin, accordion, clarinet, bass and drums as the basic instrumentation.

"The name is meant to be a little bit tongue-in-cheek. Musicians are usually useless at describing their own style of music, and I'm no exception. I really like duality and think it's a cool and eloquent part of Canadian culture that you can say something but the meaning is 180 degrees opposite, or anywhere in between. Describing in terms of opposites is an effective way of evoking something that maybe doesn't yet exist.

"I try to work with people in the band who I feel are as creative as possible, and often from a non-world music background, integrating it all with what I do. My drummer, for instance, started out playing punk. I really believe in promoting the music for the sake of the music.

"People often 'sell' music through virtuosity, or having the musicians dance around, which I enjoy doing, but it's not the music itself. My approach is a way of dealing with musicians who don't come from the traditions that I'm referencing. It's uncommon but it's paid off well."

In his compositions Freeman-Fox has a particular—and peculiar—way of using the human voice as an instrument. "The whole mission statement of The Opposite of Everything is to..." he hesitates, searching for the right word, "trick people into hearing complex instrumental music who might

not normally listen to it—and definitely not weird instrumental music.

“So voices to me have always been like a means to an end of grabbing the attention of people who are used to listening to vocal music. I’ll play so many shows where I’ll throw my heart and soul on the line at a club or bar and everyone’s just chatting away but when I start singing they shut up.

“That’s what gave me this inspiration to make music where voices are involved but are purely subservient to that music. It’s been really interesting finding the kind of singers who resonate with this—a lot of the time they’re musicians who don’t consider themselves singers at all. I try not to contain the sound of the voice too much, and let it go where it wants to.”

However his music gets tagged or described Freeman-Fox is already in the fast lane, and gearing up. Last fall he and The Opposite of Everything were in Thessaloniki, Greece, to showcase for the WOMEX world music trade fair. He’ll be in Sweden and Denmark with the band this fall, and in the U.K. and Germany for solo shows. He’s also currently in Oliver Swain’s Big Machine, and this fall he heads to Australia with The David Woodhead Confabulation and multi-instrumentalist Ben Caplan.

Meanwhile, Freeman-Fox has a new instrument to master, which seems bound to lead him in fascinating new directions. “In the last year I’ve been completely obsessed with clawhammer banjo,” he reveals. “It’s become a hopeless addiction. Whenever I’m at home I can’t seem to get anything done—all I want to do is sit and play banjo all day.



Rae Spoon

Home Alone

Rae Spoon’s haunting soundtrack accompanying the musical documentary *My Prairie Home* offers personal insight into a dark and troubled upbringing as a young lesbian in a home rife with evangelical fervor. Words by Eric Volmers.

There is a scene in the upcoming film *My Prairie Home* when a potentially unwelcome guest shows up at a Rae Spoon concert.

Spoon—the transgendered singer/songwriter who is the focus of the film—cannot say for sure who the person was. But the 31-year-old songwriter, who prefers to use ‘they’ as a pronoun, suspects it could be their father.

Spoon does not get into details about what follows. But it’s fairly safe to assume that a happy reunion was not it.

On the song *I Can’t Tear It From Me*, the final track on Spoon’s haunting soundtrack to the film, they sing “*My mother is a steeple and my father is a stalker. I try to run, but I can’t tear them from me. They own me in the land of dreams*”.

“In the film there’s a scene where someone who may be him shows up and we’re not sure,” says the soft-spoken Spoon. “It’s the element of representing what it’s like to not know when he’s showing up. It’s just something I deal with regularly.”

Spoon’s father, they are quick to point out, is not officially a stalker. But he does represent the dark forces of religious zeal

and family dysfunction that Spoon escaped as a teenager, leaving their native Calgary with a new name, a new gender and a restless new life as a touring musician.

Born a girl in Alberta, Spoon grew up in a deeply religious family ruled by unbending evangelical fervor. They came out as a lesbian while still in high school and as transgendered a few years later. At some point in the story, Spoon’s father disappeared and Rae has since severed ties.

“I feel, sometimes, that he is following me because he shows up at my shows and sometimes I’m not sure he’s there,” says Spoon, who now lives in Montreal. “I’m not saying he is a stalker, that’s just poetry. I don’t know exactly what he looks like. But also I’m on the stage, there’s lights in your eyes. There’s a ton of middle-aged white men who are bald.”

The film *My Prairie Home*, produced by the National Film Board of Canada and directed by Chelsea McMullan, will not be in theatres until later in the fall. But the soundtrack, a musically eclectic mix of autobiographical songs and haunting soundscapes, offers a tantalizing glimpse of what the film will offer. McMullan and Spoon began working on it four years ago. Described as a musical-documentary, it chronicles Spoon’s often surreal coming-of-age tale with musical numbers filmed in various locations, from the dinosaur-filled Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller to the gymnasium of a Calgary high school. It also follows Spoon relentlessly touring across the country.

Spoon calls the film uplifting, a story about escape and reconnection that explores



Jaron Freeman-Fox

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Tubthumping

an outsider's prickly relationship with home. It is, Spoon suggests, the closing of a chapter. While they have toured the Canadian indie scene for a decade now, Spoon's work made a startling transition in 2008 with the release of *Superiorityouareinferior*, a dark album that found the performer abandoning the somewhat novel transgendered cowboy esthetic for something more intimate. Two more albums followed in the same vein—2010's *Love is a Hunter* and 2012's *I Can't Keep All of Our Secrets*—with Spoon increasingly adopting electronic and dance-pop sounds while exploring semi-autobiographical themes of isolation and searching for community and belonging.

Those albums were nothing if not deeply personal. The same can be said for Spoon's debut book, 2012's short-story collection called *First Spring Grass Fire*. While those stories were about a young Calgary girl named Rae coming to grips with her sexuality while under the thumb of religious dogma and a mentally ill father, it was officially listed as a work of fiction. But with *My Prairie Home*, Spoon says they are "not cloaking things as much". It's openly and unabashedly autobiographical and follows a musical journey as well as a personal one. There are hints of gospel, country and even Nirvana-like grunge, which is what first inspired a troubled young Rae to pick up the guitar as a church-going teenager in Calgary. The writing here is gorgeous and well-crafted but also raw and revealing. Writing the songs, Spoon admits, was a painful, cathartic journey back to dark days of loneliness, self-loathing and alienation.

"I've always found music useful to process emotion. By the time you record an album or a song, you've played it a thousand times. It doesn't take the meaning out of the event but I think revisiting an event over and over helps bring closure. I think the process of it was rather difficult. But now that I've been writing it for about five years, it's almost more of a release."

Which is not to suggest the album is unrelentingly grim. There are plenty of emotions and tones colouring these songs. Humour can be found on opening track *Amy Grant*, a fragile ballad that finds Spoon in the family car listening to the titular squeaky-clean contemporary

Christian singer but searching for something more. "*I wish I'd heard of Freddie Mercury while he was still alive. I would have switched sides,*" Spoon sings.

There's defiance in the touching pop song *I Want*, which chronicles Spoon's first love in high school with a teenage girl. *I Will Be A Wall*, with its marching beat and flashes of trumpet, is an anthem about sibling solidarity in the face of repression. *Snake in the Water* is a guitar-fuelled grunge song about childhood fears.

But there's also *God Was On Your Shoulders*, a song that didn't make it into the film and explores Spoon's relationship with their mother. It's soul-crushingly sad, particularly the final verse that finds Spoon's mother, while finally leaving her husband, still rejecting Rae in favour of conservative religious dogma: "*So I live without a mother rather than in a church,*" they sing.

"I think it's a constant theme in the queer community of their families losing them because they can't accept their gender expression or sexual orientation," Spoon says. "I find that to be one of the most tragic things that does happen. I think it is a choice to not accept a queer person. You have to continually choose to not acknowledge or stay in denial about their lifestyle or not welcome their partner. Coming through this whole situation and still not being able to accept your child, I think it is pretty sad. A few of my friends have requested I not play the song around them."

Still, Spoon says *My Prairie Home* is not meant to be "hate or anger-filled". Nor is it meant to be a "revenge album."

Spoon hopes listeners, and viewers of the film, leave feeling uplifted by the knowledge that they made it through some dark years and reconnected with their Prairie home, if not everyone in their family. While Spoon's story may seem rather specific, they hope the themes are universal.

"Everyone can find a way to identify with isolation or repression or oppression," says Spoon. "Hopefully that comes through even if I can't bring people completely into it. I don't think that's possible. I guess that's what all songwriters do. You give people some words and some music with some emotion and they kind of go with it wherever they go with it."



“ It's hard not to love Kingston's THE GERTRUDES. If they wanted to, the collective could pump out ear pleasing folk and no one would complain. Instead, the band challenges themselves and their audience with collages of noise, rock, and electronics that float around traditional melodies.

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James Cotton

Mr Superharp

One of the last great Mississippi Delta-born blues musicians, James Cotton talks with Roddy Campbell about a career that helped redefine the blues playing harmonica alongside some of its greatest masters.

Precious few musicians can boast of such a colourful and storied career as James Cotton.

Consider this: as a child he learned to play blues harp literally at the feet of Sonny Boy Williamson II, cut his first

record with Howlin' Wolf at Sam Phillips's celebrated Sun Studios, co-wrote arguably the prototype for rock'n'roll, *Rocket 88*, helped create modern electric Chicago blues playing alongside Muddy Waters, and did as much as anyone to bring the blues to white audiences touring with the likes of Janice Joplin, the Grateful Dead and Led Zeppelin, besides being shot five times and surviving throat cancer.

Undoubtedly, legends don't come much more bona fide than 78-year-old James Cotton—Mr. Superharp to his friends.

And now he has released the superb *Cotton Mouth Man*—an autobiographical album of sorts that traces his remarkable journey from a harsh, impoverished childhood in the Mississippi Delta to international renown as a post-war blues pioneer. Gloriously contemporary, it flits seamlessly through various styles and influences that draw from a veteran's countless musical experiences.

At the heart of *Cotton Mouth Man* lies Grammy Award-winning producer Tom Hambridge, who has worked with the likes

of Buddy Guy, George Thorogood, Susan Tedeschi and Johnny Winter. Not only did Hambridge talk Cotton into recording in Nashville for the first time, he co-wrote all 13 tracks and recruited the likes of Greg Allman, Keb' Mo', Delbert McClinton, Ruthie Foster, and one Colin Linden—he of Blackie and the Rodeo Kings—to play on the album. Cotton contributes seven co-writes—his most on an album ever—and anchors it all with his bold, resourceful and fiercely spontaneous harmonica playing.

“Well, the thing is, a few years back I had to stop singing. I had cancer of the throat. I didn’t want to quit the music. So I started playing the harmonica more and got people to come and sing with me. I make the harp sing for me now,” says Cotton in a whisper of a voice obviously ravaged by illness.

“It’s good music in Nashville. And Tom Hambridge was there. He’s a good producer. Chicago used to be what Nashville is now. Me and him got to talking and he knows all these people because he would do stuff with them all the time. He came up with names and I said, ‘Yeah, we’ll give it a plug’. That’s how it worked.”

To write the songs, Hambridge sat Cotton down for an extended chat about his life and out of the conversation they created much of the album’s insightful and at times startling lyrics. Take *Wasn’t My Time To Go* for example:

“I was sitting at a bus stop 1961 / heading out to a night club to have a little fun / here comes a crazy man waving a gun / shot me five times but I still wasn’t done / ... I guess it wasn’t my time to go.”

While *Wasn’t My Time To Go*, *Mississippi Mud*, *Cotton Mouth Man* and *Blues Is Good For You* paint vivid background sketches of Cotton’s illustrious life, amidst his occasional love and lovelorn forays, *Bonnie Blue*, the closing track, surely rates as the most emotional song on the whole disc. The title comes from the plantation on which Cotton was born. The track simply features Colin Linden on steel guitar and Cotton on harmonica and singing again in that raspy but unshakeably warm and touching voice.

“[*Bonnie Blue*] was a long ways back. It was hard to look at it because it was kind of rough there. It was the height of the cotton crops. I worked in the hot sun all day.”

For his part, Linden was thrilled to partic-

ipate in this venture. They had previously performed together in 2009 as part of the Downchild 40th anniversary celebrations. This time around, mutual friend Tom Hambridge made the introductions.

“Tom knew that I would be thrilled to be involved with anything involving James Cotton,” says Linden. “And he did want to do one song that would feature James speaking. Because he’s had his throat problems, he doesn’t really sing anymore. But he’s got such a beautiful, lyrical voice. So he wanted to do something acoustic and real Delta blues orientated. So Tom called me up to do it and it was fantastic.

“I had met him a few times over the years although not frequently enough to know him or anything but he’s just beautiful to hang out with. I was really honoured to be involved.”

James Cotton was born the youngest of nine children on the Bonnie Blue Plantation, roughly six miles south of Tunica, MS, July 1, 1935. His parents, mother Hattie and father Mose Cotton, were religious and not exactly enamoured by the blues—the Devil’s music. Still, Hattie played the harmonica—the only instrument the family could afford.

“They were church people. My father was a Baptist preacher and my mother went to church every Sunday. She played things on the harmonica to try to put us to sleep. The first harmonica I ever heard my mother played it. She would sit alongside my bed and play train sounds so sweet,” says James.

“The first harmonica I got cost 15 cents. I liked to play the train sounds. And then I

listened to Sonny Boy Williamson playing the blues off his harmonica.”

Alongside Little Walter Jacobs, the somewhat mysterious Sonny Boy Williamson II (Aleck Rice Miller) was one of the most influential harp players in blues history. Before he died in 1965, he could boast performing with everyone from Robert Johnson to Eric Clapton. Williamson was also the blues’ first radio star.

In 1941, he and guitarist Robert Junior Lockwood were hired by radio station KFFA in Helena, AR, to play the *King Biscuit Time*, the first blues show on American airwaves. It was sponsored by the Interstate Grocery Company to popularize their King Biscuit brand of baking flour. The show became so popular that ICG named its corn meal after Sonny Boy. The *King Biscuit Time* broadcast throughout the Delta and inspired a raft of musicians including B.B. King and a seven-year-old James Cotton, who listened in on his sister’s old battery radio with the volume turned low so his parents couldn’t hear.

“We were in the fields chopping cotton and we came home to eat dinner at 12 o’clock. There was a radio in my sisters’ room. That’s where I heard him, in there. And he was something else. And I heard Sonny Boy Williamson say, ‘Tune in tomorrow at 12:15 for Sonny Boy Williamson and his King Biscuit Boys,’ as they were going off the air. I loved the sound of his harmonica. From then on I started listening. And I learned to play the things what I heard him play. But not around the house, though. If I played around the house my dad would look at me, ‘You get out of



Mr. Superharp

the house with that’.”

By the time James turned nine he had lost both of his parents and went to stay with his uncle, Wiley Green, who allowed him to play the blues in the house and to listen to Williamson on the radio undisturbed. Wiley drove a tractor on the plantation for three dollars a day. James did, too. And on one fateful payday Cotton’s life changed forever.

“I was nine years old. We got paid every two weeks, \$36 for two weeks’ work. We got paid at the commissary then. My uncle went in to get paid and buy a bottle of corn whiskey. And I walked over to the back of the commissary to play the harp. And this voice said, ‘Hey boy, play me some blues’. He had a bottle of corn whiskey in his back pocket.

“ ‘I don’t want to do that’.”

“He said, ‘Put your cap on the floor.’ I took off my cap and he threw 50 cents in it. ‘Now play me a song.’ I started playing it and people started coming out of the commissary after getting paid and they started throwing nickels and dimes and stuff like that into my cap. By the time my uncle

got paid I had a cap full of money. He got paid \$36. He couldn’t believe his eyes. He counted the money in my cap. I had \$46 in there. He said, ‘This is no place for you’.

“And he took me to see Sonny Boy. We went to station KFFA and followed [the band] all the way home. They all had on white overalls, black shirts and chauffer caps. I said, ‘Who’s Sonny Boy?’.

‘I’m Sonny Boy.’

‘I’m Sonny Boy.’

‘I’m Sonny Boy.’

“I had my harmonica in my pocket and I pulled it out and played the theme song what he played over the air everyday. And I played it note for note.

‘You must listen to Sonny Boy every day.’

‘Yeah.’

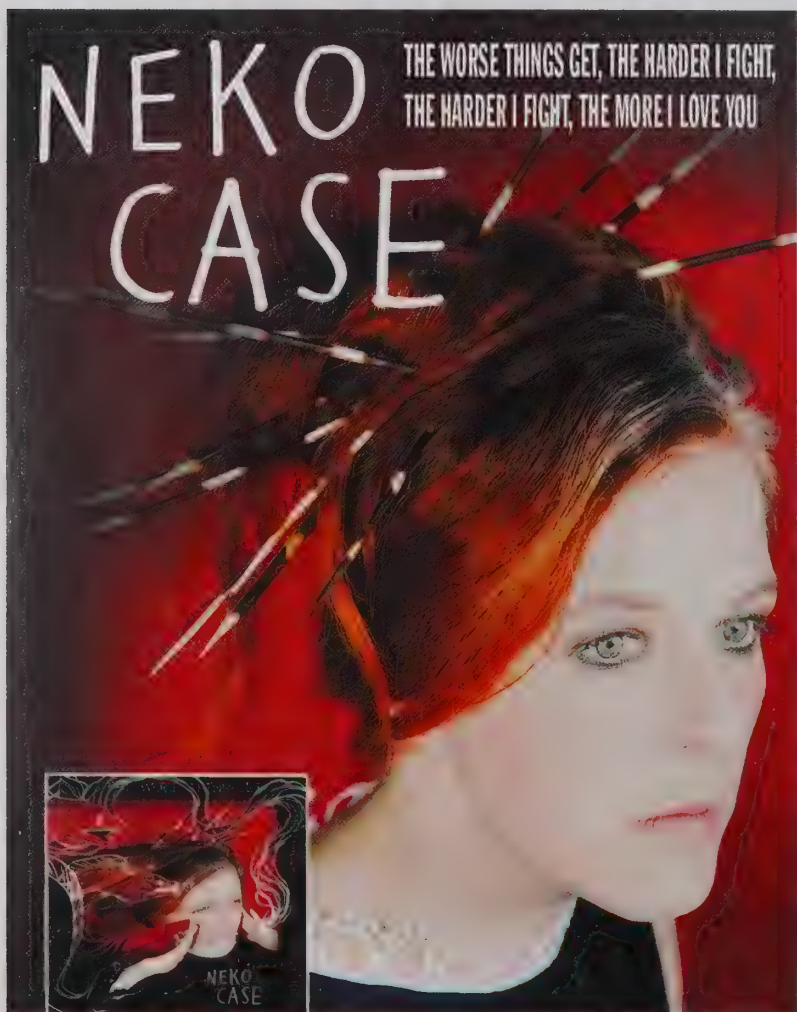
‘I’m Sonny Boy’.”

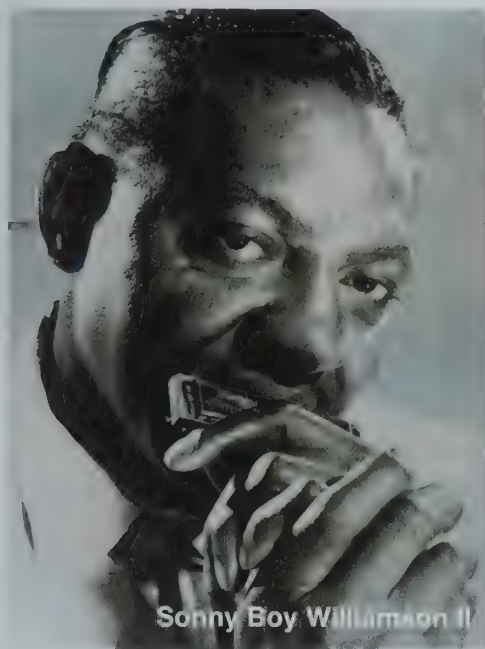
Uncle Wiley persuaded Williamson to take in his nephew. And Cotton would stay with him for six years, soaking up all the music he could. “If he played it today I played it tomorrow.” Moody and notoriously volatile, especially when drinking, Williamson could not have been an easy man to live with, surely?

“He was trouble, all right,” says Cotton, “but I got on with him good. There were a lot of people he didn’t get along good with. He had a bad temper and he would hit you. He had a knife and he would use it.”

Sonny Boy fell out with his wife, Mattie Williamson, and moved from Helena to West Memphis. He and Cotton stayed there for three months before Williamson up and moved again, leaving the 15-year-old behind. To earn a living, Cotton did various menial jobs around Memphis including shining shoes on W.C. Handy Park, just off Beale Street, where he could hear the likes of B.B. King playing for change.

“I met Elvis Presley down there,” Cotton told CBC’s *Saturday Night Blues* host Holger Petersen prior to performing at the recent Edmonton Blues Festival. “There was a place where you could get in for Blue Monday for 40 cents. He’d hang out watching people like B.B. King, Rufus Thomas, Ford Nelson. He would sit by the window, wouldn’t bother anybody and nobody bothered him. He’d sit there and watch. He did it for, I guess, about a year, I’d watch him do that. The next thing he’s





Sonny Boy Williamson II

on the Ed Sullivan Show shaking his legs. He was good at it.”

Blue Mondays were local gigs where blues musicians gathered to celebrate the end of the weekend. And Cotton, despite his youth, soon established himself as a quality musician around town. He formed his own band, The Rhythm Playmates, with Pat Hare (guitar) and John Bowens (drums). And Cotton briefly hosted his own radio show in West Memphis, which Howlin’ Wolf heard and took note.

“I had my own radio show on KWEM,” Cotton tells me. “Wolf heard me on my radio show. It was only 15 minutes each every day. He had a radio show there, too. He heard me play. And Wolf said, ‘I want to play with you’. So I said, ‘Sure, you’re on’. He’s the Howlin’ Wolf. So I played on his first records *How Many More Years* and *Moanin’ At Midnight* and both sides were a hit.”

They recorded these tracks at the now-legendary Sun Studios in 1951 with Sam Phillips. While Phillips kick-started a cultural revolution recording the likes of Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins ... he always maintained Howlin’ Wolf was the greatest artist he ever worked with.

“[Wolf] was a nice fellow,” says Cotton. “When it came to make his records you had to play his music you couldn’t skip a note. He wanted it played note for note, which I could. Muddy Waters was the same way.”

Cotton, too, began his recording career at Sun.

“I was [18] years old. I was on the radio and [Sam] called the station and asked me if I would like to record. I said, ‘I’d love it’, you know. So he said, ‘Meet me over here next Wednesday’. Wednesday week didn’t come fast enough for me. I walked into the studio. He asked me if I had any songs. I said, ‘Yeah I got one’. I’d written a song called *Cotton Crop Blues*, and another one called *Straighten Up Baby*. So he said, ‘Right, let me hear you play them’.”

According to the Sun log book, Cotton actually recorded *My Baby* and *Straighten Up Baby* April 15, 1954, and *Cotton Crop Blues* and *Hold Me In Your Hands* 10 weeks later on July 1. Whatever, his recording career had begun in earnest. And if he never made a penny out of Sam Phillips, he still holds him in high regard.

“He would help you but he liked his money better. He was all right to me. I never made a dime. But he got my music played and I’m doing what I’m doing today because he gave me a chance. So I ain’t mad at nobody.”

An interesting aside regarding Sun Records and the release of Jackie Benson’s single *Rocket 88*—a tribute to the hot Oldsmobile coupe. It made it to No.1 on the U.S. R&B charts in June 1951. It is frequently cited as the first rock’n’roll record. While Benson received the songwriting credit, Ike Turner wrote it with help from James Cotton.

“Ike Turner kind of put it together. I came up with a couple of verses and Ike went

from that. Neither one of us got no credit for it. Jackie Benson’s on credit, at least he did on the Sun label. We were driving along in the car, coming from Little Rock, Arkansas, with Howlin’ Wolf, Ike was with Howlin’ Wolf at the time, and this guy passes us by in an 88 Oldsmobile. I said, ‘That’s a Rocket 88 there. I like it’. Ike said, ‘Say what?’ I said, ‘That’s a Rocket 88’. From there he started writing things down. By the time we got West Memphis, Arkansas, he read it back to me. ‘*You women have heard of jalopies / You’ve heard the noise they make / Let me introduce my new Rocket 88.*’ He said this is a song here. Said, we all get this did.”

Despite, his association with the likes of Howlin’ Wolf and Ike Turner, Cotton still drove a truck to pay his bills. But again, fortune smiled when Muddy Waters showed up one night at Cotton’s gig in West Memphis.

“Muddy had been on tour down in Georgia, New Orleans, and all that. And Junior Wells was playing with him. Something happened between him and Junior and Junior left the band and went back to Chicago. Somebody told him I was in West Memphis somewhere. He had a few more dates left without Junior so he came looking for me. I was driving a truck—a dump truck—and playing on weekends. I was playing at the Dinette Lounge. All my friends are there and they said there is somebody here looking at you, some out of town man. I didn’t know it was Muddy



From L to R: James Cotton, Johnny Winter and Muddy Waters

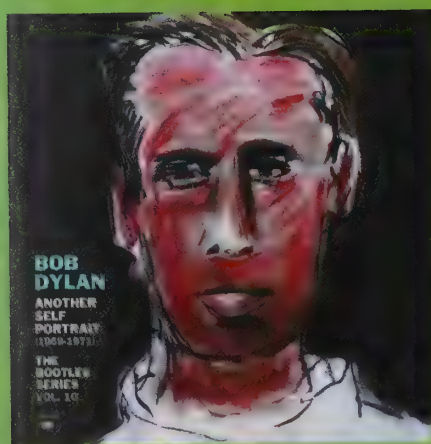
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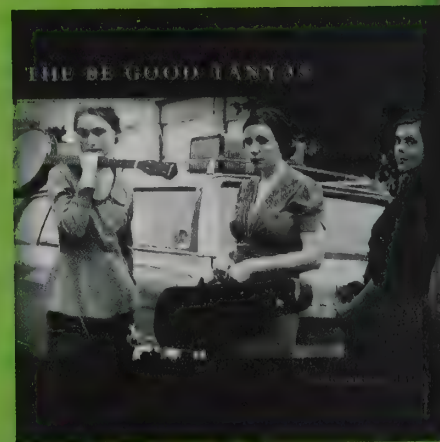
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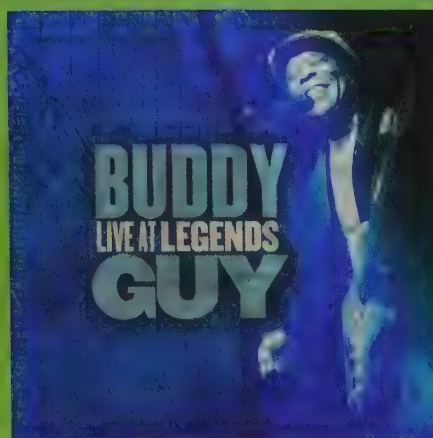
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Waters. They didn't know what Muddy Waters looked like.

"We took a break and he walked over to me and he said, 'I'm Muddy Waters'. I said, 'I'm Jesus Christ.' I didn't believe him. He had such humility. He said, 'I'm at 500 Beale Street tomorrow night; meet me there at 8:30'. I said sure I'll be there. He said, 'I'm going to give you a job'. I showed up. Jimmy Rogers, Otis Spann, Elgin Edmunds and Bob Bradley was Muddy's band. Jimmy Rogers helped me set up my amp."

Within a week, Cotton was on his way to Chicago with Waters. While they would perform live together for the next 12 years, Waters initially used Little Walter Jacobs on many of his renowned '50s recordings for the Chess label. His quintessential live version of *I Got My Mojo Working*, though, was a notable exception.

"We were on tour with this lady named Ann Cole. Ann Cole wrote *Got My Mojo Working*. I was putting things together so I tried to raise it when Muddy was singing it. Muddy, whenever he was recording a song, used Little Walter and he handled the arrangements on it. And [*Mojo*] came out and it didn't do nothing that much ... Little Walter was the best harmonica player I had ever heard and for me to be there trying to take his place was a hard scuffle but I managed it in some kind of way.

"We went to Newport to play in 1960. Muddy said, 'I want to do that *I Got My Mojo Working*'. And I put the arrangements on it, me and the piano player [Otis Spann]. It was recorded live.

"After the show I got fired. He forgot the words. He told me, 'You messed up my show'. I said, 'I ain't messed up nothing. You messed up your own show'. He said, 'I'm Muddy Waters!' I said, 'I don't care who you is'. He said, 'I'm going to kill you'. I did not say a word. 'You're fired.' I said, 'OK.'

"They sent the tapes from Newport back to Chess Records. We got back in town and that morning Chess called him to come on down and listen to the tapes. Muddy called me and said meet me at the studio tomorrow we've got to redo these tapes. I said I know we is. I told him the words again and he sung them. And it was the biggest hit he ever had."

The following year, Cotton was randomly

shot five times, including once in the head, at a bus stop by a "crazy man" who had previously fired his gun in a nightclub in St. Louis while the Muddy Waters band played onstage. The blues world was often marred with violence and most of its characters carried guns, including Cotton. He would make a remarkable recovery, though, and as the decade progressed he eventually left Waters to form his own band.

"Rock'n'roll started getting big. And when I was a young boy I ... didn't want to disrespect Muddy Waters band by playing the blues and trying to play rock there. That's what made me go out with my own band. That's why I got the band."

With the help of young emerging blues hipsters like Paul Butterfield and Elvin Bishop, Cotton was one of the first traditional blues musicians to perform on the city's predominantly white North Side.

"Paul Butterfield, he lived in Chicago. We were playing in Chicago quiet a bit then. He knew my name. I didn't know he was trying to be a harmonica player. But we got to be friends. And he pulled out his harmonica one day and started asking me things about it. So I started telling him. And Paul would request things and I'd play it for him. And I kept doing that until he learned to play it. There was this student who played a guitar hanging around with him, which I know now was Elvin Bishop."

Butterfield introduced Cotton to Albert Grossman, who managed the likes of Bob Dylan; The Band; Janis Joplin; Peter, Paul and Mary; Odetta ... And Grossman booked Cotton to open for Joplin on numerous occasions. "She was a great lady, a fine singer." Such exposure, again, broadened his audience and he would go on to perform with many of rock's heavyweights: The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, The Grateful Dead ... I tell him the first concert I ever saw in Canada was Cotton opening for Boz Scaggs and The Steve Miller Band at the PNE Forum in Vancouver in 1974.

"Yeah, yeah," he chuckles. "We had good times in them days. Once in awhile, we get back with these guys; we still do those things together."

It was a gloriously raucous, freewheeling, high-energy affair, if memory serves me well. A typical Cotton gig by all accounts. Those exhilarating performances would stand Cotton in good stead as he main-



tained his popularity as interest in the blues waned in the early '80s.

James Cotton: Cut You Loose—his debut solo LP—came out on the Verve label in 1966. At last count, his discography, including collaborations and compilations, now exceeds 30 releases recorded for such prestigious labels as Alligator, Vanguard, Telarc, Buddah, Blind Pig, and Antone's. These discs would generate four Grammy nominations and the Best Traditional Blues Album Award for his 1996 release *Deep In The Blues*, backed by Joe Louis Walker and Charlie Haden. That Grammy win was an amazing achievement considering he developed throat cancer two years earlier. Radiation treatment and surgery had left his voice ravaged and with no real ability to sing. But with that unflagging spirit of his, and the help of others, he continued to blow that harp with his trademark intensity, as witnessed at his recent performance in Edmonton.

"[Playing the harmonica] is part of my soul," he says.

Lastly, I ask him how he remembers the two giants of post-war blues: Wolf and Waters. "They were almost too good," he says quietly. "Muddy was more uptown. Howlin' Wolf was downtown. Muddy was all Chicago. Howlin' Wolf had a lot of country in him."

James Cotton was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in Memphis in 2006.

Loudoun Wainwright

The Penguin Eggs Interview



Loudoun Wainwright

Loudoun Wainwright III is most often described as a songwriter, folksinger, humourist, and actor. He has famous kids, including musicians Rufus Wainwright and Martha Wainwright, from his marriage to Kate McGarrigle. Since the late '60s he has been writing songs that alternate between witty ditties, searing sarcastic satires and impactful protest songs. He has acted on TV, memorably in *M*A*S*H*; appeared in films, such as *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* and *Knocked Up*; written topical songs for radio and TV and composed music for the theatre. His song *Dead Skunk (in the Middle of the Road)* became a novelty hit in 1972; whilst in the U.K. his weekly appearances in the 1980s on comedian Jasper Carrott's TV show established his continuing popularity.

He has recorded more than 20 albums to date, mostly of original songs, and in 2010 he won a Grammy with *High Wide & Handsome: The Charlie Poole Project*. He's renowned for his confessional and brutally honest writing style, his quick and barbed humour, and his astute and keenly observed political opinions. I caught up

with him backstage after his first ever appearance at the Vancouver Folk Music Festival.

Is songwriting a kind of therapy for you?

Well, it's not really therapeutic. It exacerbates my neuroses. Hopefully it's therapeutic for other people. It's catharsis ... release. People laugh at a song or get pissed off at a song and that's therapeutic for them so they got their money's worth. I provide therapy but I don't partake in it except when I go to a shrink!

On your new release, *Older than My Old Man Now*, why did you end up using selections of your father's work?

My dad was a famous journalist who wrote for *Life* magazine ... so I've used pieces of his work in conjunction with two of my songs because it was great. He's been dead for over 25 years and I now realize that we are writing about a lot of the same stuff. We are, you know, genetically close

so I combined his work and my work—it's a kind of posthumous collaboration—and it's great. I am developing a whole show using eight of his columns. Some of them are 10 minutes long including my songs. That's going to be done in North Carolina.

All the songs on *Older than My Old Man Now* are about death and decay. How do you write songs like that without becoming a completely miserable git all the time?

Well, let me put it out there that I am a completely miserable git, although fortunately my audience doesn't know it! I knew I wanted to write an album where every song dealt with the 'double D'—death and decay—but we realized, the producer Dick Connette and I, that we had to make it not a complete bummer. So we have novelty songs like *My Meds* ... a song called *I Remember Sex* and then we also had other singers. My kids are on the record; Dame Edna, Jack Elliott—one of my biggest idols—and Chris Smither are on the record. If it was one guy singing these songs it would have been probably unbearable. So we decided to make a record about death and decay without being too miserable and I think we succeeded, don't you?

What about the topical songs you wrote for NPR? How did that come about?

There's a guy at NPR called Tom Cole who's a producer for *Morning Edition*. He got in touch with me; I'd been writing topical songs since the '70s. He asked me to try writing topical songs. Aside from writing novelty songs I also write a lot about my life and family and parents and kids ... so it's kind of a relief not to write about them. So that was good thing ... another thing was that somebody says we need a song about Tonya Harding in three days and you go and you do it. So it's a way of getting your ass kicked and getting some songs. So I enjoy doing it. It's a folk thing ... broad-

side material.

How did your guitar playing style evolve?

Rambling Jack Elliott was my first major musical hero. When I was a kid at boarding school down in the state of Delaware, I used to take weekends to go see Jack Elliott play at a bar in Philly called the Second Fret. So just technically, my whole right hand thing totally comes from Rambling Jack. I still play the same five chords I learned when I was 15. Now I've been playing the guitar for 50 years so, you know, hopefully you get good at it. I'm waiting for Martin Guitars to have the Loudon Wainwright model. So far they haven't bit!

Who are some of the people you have enjoyed touring with the most?

I used to open shows for Ian and Sylvia at the beginning of my career. More recently Dar Williams ... I've done shows in the past and I am going to do a bunch more with my friend and contemporary Leo Kottke. Richard Thompson—have you ever seen the *Loud and Rich* show? Talk about my guitar playing ... I put the guitar down when Richard plays. We have fun. They are the first ones that come to mind.

What's working with your kids like?

Oh, those ungrateful ... well, I get 'em for cheap! I just remind them—look, if it weren't for me you basically wouldn't be here, so don't ask me for double scale, man! So I pay them a pittance ... no ... I have four children, three of which are professional musicians: Rufus, Martha and Lucy—and my daughter, Lexi, can sing, too. They are all on my new album and they are great singers. It's kind of like the dysfunctional Von Trapp family. Like if Christopher Plummer was a roaring alcoholic and Julie Andrews was a loose woman. What an exciting thought that is! My goodness!

How's your acting career?

I am hoping to get a job right now—it feels like an audition! I don't have a damn

thing on the horizon, it's dried up. My original plan was to be an actor so I went to drama school in the '60s and then I dropped out ... to take drugs, basically! But my original thought was to be an actor so I trained to be an actor. Man, if I had to earn a living as an actor ... I'd be a waiter ... a very elderly waiter.

Are you still committed to doing political protest songs?

Well, I did *I'll be Killing You this Christmas* today. It's about gun control or the lack thereof. It's such a bad situation. I sang that song about six months ago in Colorado and at the CD table where you kibbitz with people and try to sell them a CD this person came up to me and said I really loved the show but it's way too soon to do that. He was very upset. I said, 'OK, I understand'. Then about three months ago I was in Blacksburg, the town where Virginia Tech is, where the biggest mass shooting ever was ... one guy with two handguns killed 33 people ... and I thought, 'Well, this is crazy, I can't not do this song'. I mean, I set it up because I didn't want to shock people ... and that time people came up to me and thanked me for it. So you know, some people are going to be upset and some people are going to be OK. I think it's part of the job. It's great to entertain people and make them laugh but you also got to make

them think.

People have thanked me and that's a great thing—you do feel you provide a service. An entertainer or, to use fancier word, an artist can somehow release things in an audience or in people—I think it is an honourable profession and it is needed. I know when I go and see someone—Mose Allison or somebody I would pay money to go see—I really feel like they've helped me and to get back to the beginning of the conversation it was kind of therapy and not only a way to spend an hour and a half. When people come up and say thanks for that song, or that another song helped ... or *Dead Skunk* helped get me through high school ... I say, 'Oh man, get the fuck out of here!'. No, really, I say thank you!

What about the Grammy you won for *High Wide & Handsome*?

It was mainly songs recorded and made popular by Charlie Poole. He was a great entertainer, banjo player and singer from North Carolina, where I was born, and I've been a fan of his since the early 1970s. Dick Connette had an idea to record the album—we did a bunch of Charlie Poole's material and then we wrote nine songs of our own. Yes! I won a Grammy! So in the obit which is coming up—skunk guy; father of blah blah blah, and ... Grammy Award winner!!!! I hope there's room for it all!



Loudon Wainwright minus children

REVIEW S



VALERIE
JUNE



PATTY GRIFFIN

American Kid

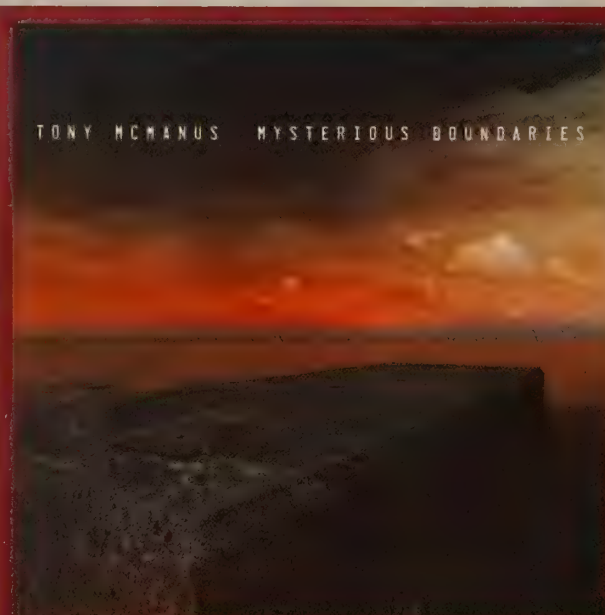


Dustin Bentall
& The Smokes

You Are
an Island



BELLA HARDY
battloplan



TONY MCMANUS MYSTERIOUS BOUNDARIES

If anything, *Ghost on Ghost* may lack the urgency of its predecessor but is fully equipped with the same exultant beauty.

— Iron & Wine, Page 59

Hypnotizing Americana from former California history teacher Rita Hosking . . . A five-star album if ever there was one.

— Rita Hosking, Page 65



Sam Baker

say grace (Sam Baker Music)

Kate Rusby springs to mind when listening to Sam Baker. Not stylistically, of course, but aesthetically. She makes wonderful records that waiver little in presentation and consistency of quality. Baker does, too. *say grace*, his fourth release, maintains all the first-class acoustic idiosyncrasies of his past recordings with slightly more piano shading on *Button By Button*, *Sweet Hour of Prayer*, and *Feast* and includes a tasty bit of brass on *Isn't Love Grand*. And if that latter title, and *Go In Peace*, on initial reflection appear somewhat twee, they mask Baker's wonderful ability to transcend even the most mundane statements. *Isn't Love Grand* is actually hilarious—a notable tribute to a quirky couple. Ditto, *Ditch Migrants*, however, tells the tragic tale of poor Mexican workers lost in the desert, dying of dehydration: “*They got 12 lines in a mid-Western paper / on the pages for the ads for shoes / they were 14 men who got lost in the desert / they were migrants / they got 12 lines of news*”.

Strip any Sam Baker album to its ultimate essence and you're left with a warm, welcoming voice that doesn't so much sing as speak its parts, popping out staccato statements laced with colourful, tiny details: “*Now there's grey in her hair / She sits at her table on a wrought iron chair / she wears a terry cloth robe, with a tear / when she's alone (say grace)*”. A young John Prine once made records this intimate. Sam Baker's his own man, though, and his one true constant is a remarkable ability to make memorable recordings like this. Amen.

— By Roddy Campbell

Patty Griffin

American Kid (New West Records)

Remember a few years back when everybody lost their minds over that Alison Krauss-Robert Plant album that was showered with mainstream accolades and Grammys and reinstated Plant as viable roots commodity? Hopefully a similar fervor will be whipped up over Patty Griffin's superb *American Kid*. Griffin, who has been busily fashioning a reputation of her own over the

last decade-plus, sang in Plant's vaunted Band of Joy and the former Mr. Zeppelin returns the favour here with a pair of co-writing credits and guest vocal spots.

That's just the hook to get folks through the door—the real attractions are Griffith's thrilling voice, her tough, lived-through songs and the amazing instrumental support she musters to put them across—she also throws in Lefty Frizzell's *Mom and Dad's Waltz* a few songs in, as if originals like *Don't Let Me Die in Florida* and *Wild Old Dog* hadn't already established her roots cred. So if comparisons to *Raising Sand* encourage you to check out Griffin's comparable talents, by all means be encour-



aged. Otherwise, you can catch up when she crops up on critics' best-of lists at the end of 2013.

— By Scott Lingley

Jayme Stone

The Other Side of the Air (Independent)

Jayme Stone continues his musical voyage around the world via the banjo. And what a long, strange trip it's been. He continues to be influenced by his time in West Africa, adding Persia, India and the uninhabited island of Alexander Heights into the mix.

This album is less about Stone's virtuosity on the five-string banjo than composition and arrangement. Just about all of the tracks are orchestral, and he generously shares solos, with clarinet, oboe, bassoon and especially trumpet.

While Stone wrote seven of the pieces, his collaborator and bass/cello player, Andrew Downing, composed and arranged the centrepiece of the album, the 20-minute, three movement *This County Is My Home*, a concerto for banjo and chamber symphony commissioned by the Home County Folk Festival. It's a challenging piece for these ears, for sure, but after a couple of listens it grew on me as it headed towards a crashing climax.

Stone may have veered far from his roots that started with Scruggs rolls but he acknowledges them with an almost straightforward version of *Tennessee Waltz*.

— By Mike Sadava

The Garifuna Collective

Ayo (Stonetree/cumbancha)

Bringing the Garifuna culture to international audiences, this Belize-based group carries on the tradition of the great Andy Palacio, whose 2007 recording *Watina* introduced Garifuna

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Reviews

music to the world. Tragically, Palacio died of a sudden heart attack in early 2008 at the age of 47, and this group of singers and musicians ably reflect upon and build upon his legacy.

Belize producer Ivan Duran is at the centre of the music again as he masterfully pulls together this recording of the subtle Afro-Caribbean sound built on the traditional primero and segundo hand drums, rattles and chants, with sinewy electric guitars and bass. This is truly a collective work, with 10 different singers sharing the lead vocals of the 12 tracks, and communal group feel seeps into every song.

Special guests include Drew Gonsalves, leader of Toronto-based Kobo Town, and Honduran singer Aurelio Martinez; both have worked with Duran on their own recordings. After touring throughout Canada this summer with singer/songwriter Danny Michel (who worked with them on his own fine Ivan Duran produced album), the Garifuna Collective have established themselves as a worthy successor to the legend of Andy Palacio.

— By Jonathan Kertzer

Bella Hardy

Battleplan (Noe Records)

Bella Hardy is a musician from England's Peak District whose reputation is growing in leaps and bounds. Her latest release intertwines new interpretations and re-writes of traditional songs with newly written originals, interpreted in a traditional style. It is well produced by Karine Polwart's beau Mattie Foulds and features

Hardy's touring band (now named The Midnight Watch) — Anna Massie on guitar, banjo and vocals; Angus Lyon on keys and James Lindsay on bass. Bella sings and plays piano and fiddle.

Her voice is unadorned and allowed to shine in its natural, somewhat vulnerable-sounding state. Thematically *Battleplan* is dominated by stories in which women often suffer at the hands of cruel men. *Sleeping Beauty* typifies the lyrical content, "Life is as much in kisses as it is in blood and grit / Look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it". This is a classy release which effortlessly blends influences and blurs the boundary between traditional and personal songs. It manages to sound bang up to date, but somehow does it in an ancient-sounding kind of way. The reviewers have been raving and I see no reason not to join them

—By Tim Readman

Sultans Of String

Symphony! (Independent)

Sultans Of String co-founder/violinist Chris McKhool grew up playing in youth orchestras and has long held dreams of taking his celebrated Canadian quintet—known for its mix of global music traditions—into the symphonic sphere. What's unusual is how well it works to have a 55-piece, hand-picked orchestra backing and boosting the group's wide-ranging grooves and melodies. In short, they swing.

About half the tracks draw from previous SOS albums. Either way, making Gypsy-jazz, Arabic, Latin, Celtic and flamenco streams

work in such a situation is no small feat, for which arranger Rebecca Pellett and conductor Jamie Hopkings deserve their credit.

There's real attention to dynamics, from big moments that use the orchestra to those spare, intimate solo features for McKool, guitarist Kevin Laberte and occasional guests like The Chieftains' Paddy Moloney on *Sable Island*. My only wish is that they had found something grander for Dala to sing than *Will You Marry Me*, the only vocal number near the close of an otherwise instrumental album, but this is one lively musical meeting.

— By Roger Levesque

Ry Cooder and Corridos Famosos

Live At The Great American Music Hall
(Nonesuch/Warner)

How fitting that Ry Cooder's first live album in 35 years took place at San Francisco's Great American Music Hall. Great American music is the only honest way to label the range of his *Corridos Famosos*, which includes Terry Evans as one of three extra vocalists, Joachim Cooder on drums, and Flaco Jimenez on accordion. It gets spicier still with the addition of the 10-piece Mexican brass of La Banda Juvenil.

Some of their 73-minute set takes off from the Latino folk-rock sound and pointed politics Cooder has plumbed since 2005's *Chavez Ravine*. There's a hip mix from the traditional Tex-Mex flavour of Woody Guthrie's *Do Re Mi* or *Goodnight Irene* to the soul ballad *Dark End Of The Street* (with Evans's lead vocal), to light-hearted rockers like *School Is Out* and *Wooly Bully*.

The bandleader shows his expert guitar skills off a few times but the choice thrills



come in the mesh of his guitar, the riffing horns and the rest on his own *Lord Tell Me Why* or the majestic *El Corrido De Jesse James*. Cooder's patter completes this delicious concert experience.

— By Roger Levesque

Valerie June

Pushin' Against A Stone (Concord Records)

You know the hype machine is fully engaged when you find a Starbucks download card with Valerie June's name on it before you have ever heard a note. Well there is some reason. Valerie June has a terrific, oddly tuned but engaging voice that, for some reason, made me think of Ruthie Foster crossed with Cold Specks.

Raised in small town in Tennessee and now based in Memphis, Valerie June started out a singer in a band but quickly decided to be her own boss and plugged away on the guitar and banjo, learning about the music of the '20s and '30s and soaking in everything Alan Lomax ever put on tape.

Pushin' Against A Stone is a polished production of 11 original and traditional bluesy-rootsy tunes embracing the past

and the present, with a couple of standout songs. *Somebody To Love* (two versions; one is a bonus hidden tune at the end) stands out as well as does the sparse haunting murder ballad *Shotgun*.

Valerie June has the advantage of a big push behind her at this time, but also the talent to back it up. It's an interesting record from an interesting artist.

— By les siemieniuk

Joseph Arthur

The Ballad of Boogie Christ (Lonely Astronaut LLC)

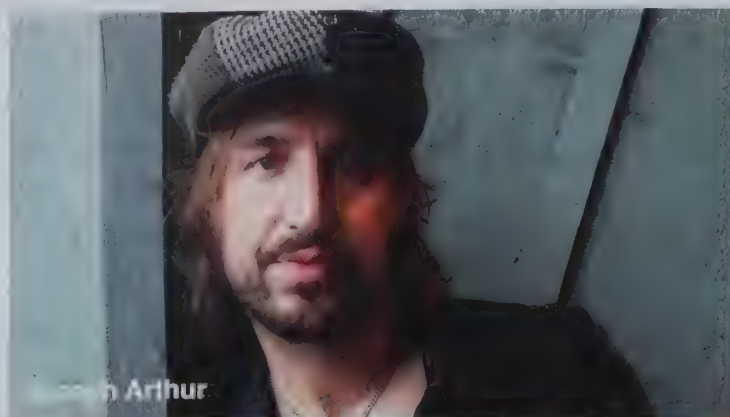
I look at the CD cover. On it, the boy stands, perfectly coiffed yet shaggily casual, wrapped in a perfect leather jacket, a bandana draped languidly around his neck, his hands clutching

two fully extended birds' wings that cover his chest. It's a lovely black-and-white photograph.

Instantly I know that whoever put this together is the kind of guy that's either a poser that I'm gonna hate with a passion or perhaps a great artist who has taken the time to think through every detail.

Looking at the spine it says, Joseph Arthur.

Originally from Akron, OH, and now working in Brooklyn, NY, Mr. Arthur comes with a pretty impressive body of work. And this is a pretty impressive individual piece of work. A 12-song, themed, recording, lyrically dense with religious overtones and sometimes self-indulgent episodes. It is totally fascinating and totally



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engrossing: a true journey of discovery.

The song titles give you an idea of what you're in for—*Currency of Love, Saint of Impossible Causes, I Used To Walk On Water, It's OK To Be Young, Gone, All of the Old Heroes*. You get the drift—an examined life is worth living. It's wonderful piece of work, poppy and light at times and never too dark or inaccessible; the man is a true artist.

– By les siemieniuk

Townes Van Zandt

High, Low and In Between (Omnivore Recordings/Capital)

Townes Van Zandt

The Late Great Townes Van Zandt (Omnivore Recordings/Capital)

These two classic 1971/1972 recordings, originally released on the Poppy and Tomato labels, respectively, have now been re-released on Omnivore/

Capital so fans can have two classic Townes Van Zandt discs, unavailable for years. The label is run by Cheryl Pawelski, Greg Allen, Brad Rosenberger and Dutch Cramblitt, all music business veterans with a string of credits too long to list here. The new releases sound great. This critic had an old 1989 CD of the first disc and can testify first hand that the new release sounds louder, cleaner, has more presence and a much deeper bass response than the previous disc. These are two of the recordings that established Van Zandt as a major songwriter. The first contains such songs as *You Are Not Needed Now, To Live Is To Fly, Mr. Mudd and Mr. Gold, Blue Ridge Mountains*, while the second has *Pancho & Lefty* (which became a 1983 hit for Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard and

is probably Van Zandt's best known song), Hank Williams's *Honky Tonkin', If I Needed You*, and *No Lonesome Tune*. With musicians the calibre of Larry Carlton on the first disc and Vassar Clements on the second, these are both must-haves for any fans of Townes Van Zandt and great introductions for those that haven't yet heard him.

– By Barry Hammond

Rory Block

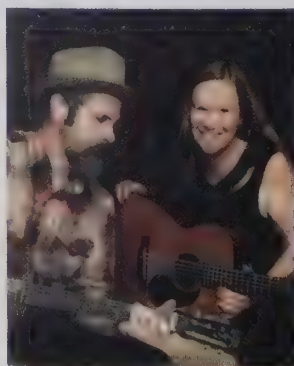
Avalon: A Tribute to Mississippi John Hurt (Stony Plain)

When it comes to doing her part to draw attention to the blues—and the genre's strongest original players—Rory Block is a regular Mother Teresa. Over a course of some 27 releases, Block has paid tribute to the likes of Robert Johnson, Fred McDowell, Son House

and Reverend Gary Davis—her 'mentor series'. Like the consummate student, she digs down deep to study the works of her favourite players and, a true artist herself, repaints their picture through her gifted hands and vocals. Yet, you might wonder what she brings along to the party? The first track is her own—in personalized tribute to Hurt. It soars rather than bounces in the way she was first attracted to Hurt's simple music, yet it tells a marvellous story as it falls from her diary. Its very chorus makes for a perfect epitaph. Her trip through *Avalon* and the next nine Hurt originals are buoyant and joy-filled, her slide and finger-picking as uplifting as her vocal ballet. Hurt's *Candy Man* comes alive in her hands and, as her favourite of Hurt's songs follows with *Frankie &*



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Albert, there is absolutely no trepidation in her treatment. What Block adds is a zest that embellishes the comparably one-dimensional originals. The energy courses through her veins. In so doing, she draws more attention to their overall contribution and stimulates interest in each original. If you didn't know the originals, you will be more than pleased with the love, energy and sheer delight she has created here.

— By Eric Thom

Iron and Wine

Ghost on Ghost (4 AD)

I wasn't sure Sam Beam and his shifting lineup of backing players could reach the same heights as 2011's subtly edgy, nigh-perfect *Kiss Each Other Clean*, but if *Ghost on Ghost* falls short of nigh-perfect—and it may take months of repeated listenings to make that determination—it's not for want of ambition. Beam continues to expand his sonic palette, drawing on a roster of A-list uptown jazz players and employing a full horn section to pursue the jazzier inclinations hinted at in previous work, from the woozy, calypso-inflected opener *Caught in the Briars* (which gets a breathtaking call-back on *Sundown*) through the elaborate *Lovers' Revolution*, which builds intensity with Mingus-style polyphony and steadily increasing tempo behind Beam's incantatory vocal.

But those are just the trimmings on Beam's exemplary songcraft and soaring voice, which are manifest on poppier numbers like *The Desert Babbler*, *Grace for Sinners and Saints* (which showcases Beam's knack for cascading, palpable imagery), and the album closer *Baby Center Stage*, which could take pride of place on any four-star country-rock



album. If anything, *Ghost on Ghost* may lack the urgency of its predecessor but is fully equipped with the same exultant beauty.

— By Scott Lingley

Lynn Miles

Downpour (Independent)

Lynn Miles is a music business veteran who's gone from Ottawa to Los Angeles and back with stop-offs in Nashville and Austin, TX. She's won multiple Canadian Folk Music Awards, most recently the 2011 English Songwriter of the Year, and a Juno Award in 2003 for Roots and Traditional Solo Al-



bum of the Year. She regularly tours the U.S. and Europe and has around a dozen discs to her credit. However, the excellence of her latest disc is such that it surely ranks among her best. The quality of the songwriting and playing is top notch and her voice has never sounded better.

Ian Lefevre, who's worked on several of her previous records as well as with Kathleen Edwards and the Barenaked Ladies, has to get some credit as producer, engineer, mixer, and multi-instrumentalist. Tracks like *My Road*, *Million Brilliant* and *Broken Hearted* rank with any international artist and there isn't a dud on the disc. Top marks.

— By Barry Hammond

Tony McManus

Mysterious Boundaries (Compass)

The plot so far: gifted mathematician and guitarist throws his lot in with the folkies, releases a couple of incredible instrumental records plumbing the depths of Scottish, Irish and Quebecois traditional music, rapidly broadens his repertoire to include jazz and other musical traditions, moves to Canada,

and finally finds himself staring down the maw of (portentous concert hall reverb!) Classical Music. Lacking formal training in either theory or guitar, the challenge presented must have been a formidable one but our Tony acquits himself memorably, the end result being a very satisfying and highly enjoyable recording. Folk it ain't, but I can't help but hear a certain looseness in his playing deriving from McManus's earlier days.

Probably those with more of an ear for classical guitar would have lots to say along these lines, but ... I can say that he chooses tuneful pieces rather than the screechy-bonky end of things (not that there's anything wrong with a little screech and bonk), including some (very) well-known classics like Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (*Aria and Variation 1*) and Satie's *Gnossienne #1*. The disc is bookended with Couperin's *Les Barricades Mystérieuses* (hence the album title), which is glorious in both of its versions recorded here. So, like I said, not folk but pretty attractive nonetheless.

— By Richard Thornley



Jessica Rhaye

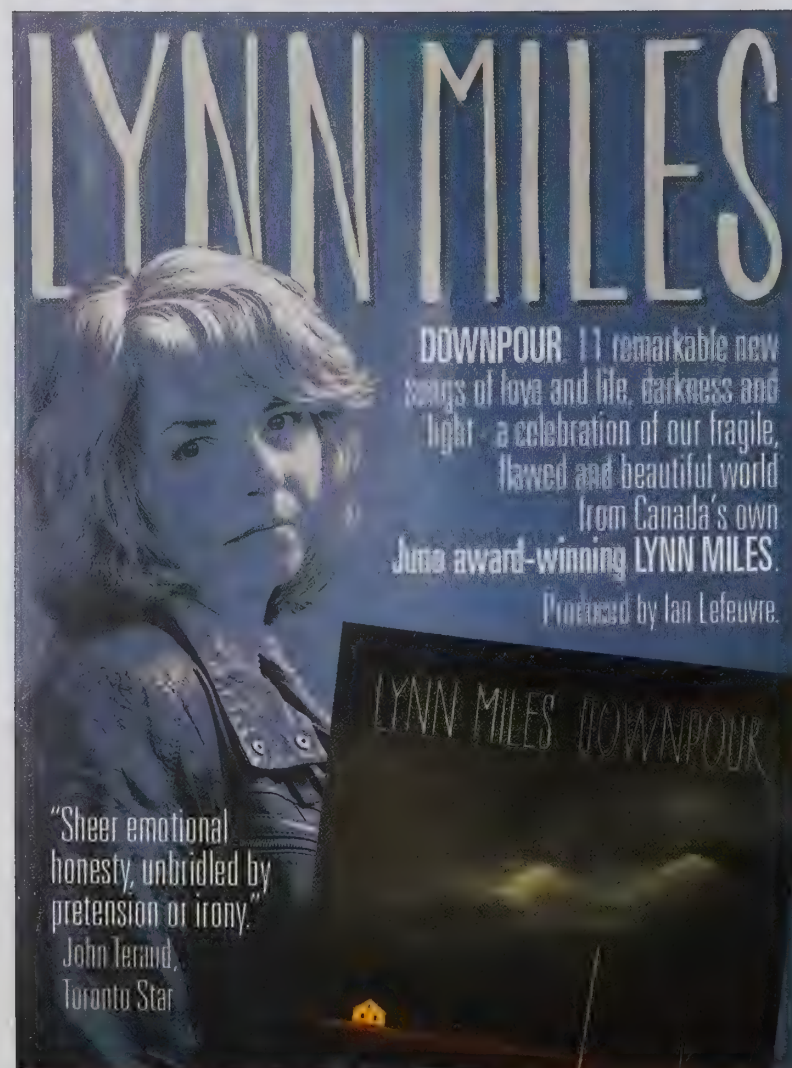
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Amos Garrett Jazz Trio

Jazz Blues (Stony Plain)

Subtlety. Nuance. Refinement. Descriptors like these might seem a million miles away from Amos Garrett's humble beginnings as a member of the Dirty Shames, following a course as member of a folk jug band prior to accepting an invitation to join the Tysons' Great Speckled Bird. All of this predates a substantial career, making his distinctive mark on some of the best music of an entire generation. Still, this album comes as an even more welcome surprise, even though it shouldn't.

Amos Garrett has long been a textbook case of smart playing, making the most of space around his notes, and for his ability to consistently find the sweet spot. Yet *Jazz Blues* goes beyond this to become a celebration of his instrument as it embraces an entire category of influences and some of Garrett's most treasured music. Joining him in these live, cross-Canada recordings are fingerstyle guitarist Keith Smith and Greg Carroll and/or John Hyde on bass.

The trio format breathes life into jazz compositions by Miles Davis, Freddie Hubbard, Thelonious Monk and, despite the fact that are predominantly horn pieces, the sheer artistry of the Garrett/Smith combination transforms each excursion into music that is as beautiful as it is uplifting and hypnotic. With a mission of bringing the blues back into jazz, the intuition between both guitar players is substantial and the results attain a gentle, dream-like quality.

Garrett calls it, upon com-

pleting the disc highlight—Freddie Hubbard's 10-plus minute *Little Sunflower*, noting, "That's the shit right there"—and he's dead right. Sam Coslow's *Cocktails For Two* may suffer a Garrett vocal treatment (never his strongest suit) yet the man updates it with the hint of humour the '34 hit deserves. Exquisite interplay for those who love emotional expression and delectable tone.

— By Eric Thom

Jory Nash

Little Pilgrims (Thin Man Records)

Jory Nash soaks up his influences like a sponge but when he wrings them out they have morphed into something new and unique. Maybe it's his recognizable voice, in the higher registers yet husky. Or else it's his way with chords and melodies, which often twist and turn into unexpected yet logical side roads. Or the phrasing of his lyrics, which have the range of emotions from unbridled joy to fear and a colourful cast of characters, from a bank robber holed up in Mexico to a witness to the G20 riots in Toronto.

Although Nash is open about trying to incorporate elements of artists such as Dylan and Tom Waits, it all comes out as pure Nash. He has developed a style of his own, and it all hangs together from song to song here.

This is the seventh album from the prolific Torontonion, and a full band record rather than a bunch of tracks with different musicians. Nash generally tours solo but he's got his favourite players, such as guitarist Jason Fowler and pianist David Matheson, as well as some vocal backup guests such as Suzie Vinnick

and Amanda Walther, who is one half of Dala.

I'd never put my money on Nash's beloved Maple Leafs but I'd bet this disc will boost his profile in places far from Toronto.

— By Mike Sadava

Chloe Albert

Dream Catcher (Independent)

In the realm of confessional folk-rock Albert has a better sense for pop hooks than many of her peers do, and a formula that in a less cluttered landscape would guarantee her radio play. She's a straight ahead songwriter, prone to uncomplicated displays of happiness (*Joy*), get-back-up-on-your-feet-and-dust-yourself-off wisdom (*Million Reasons*, *Something Magnificent*) and occasional expressions of mild melancholia (*Say Goodbye*), kind of like a prairie Sheryl Crow. This is slick, well-crafted stuff, abetted by Stew Kirkwood's deft production and sweet instrumental touches; what's missing is the breakout single that will signal the industry that Albert is ready for the next step.

She's definitely closer with *Dream Catcher*.

— By Tom Murray

The Gertrudes

Neighbourhood (Apple Crisp)

Ontario's The Gertrudes—who have as much in common with personnel-intensive DIY indie-rock combos like Library Voices as they do with your standard folk-fest fodder—expand their usual complement of 10 members (including a dedicated theremin player) with an additional 19 voices, brass and stringed instruments on *Neighbourhood* which, appropriately, was recorded in band members' living rooms within a four-block radius of Kingston's Skeleton Park. The



advantage of this marshaling of talents is that *Neighbourhood*, while sonically coherent, presents plenty of variety from track to track—sometimes even within the same song, as when the propulsive pop of *All Your Stars* turns into a lilting 6/8 lullaby driven by chiming piano and layers of strings.

And if you like a dose of social commentary with your singalong choruses, The Gertrudes air their beef with global capitalism on songs like *All the Dollar Bills Sing Hallelujah*, which might sound at home on the next Chumbawamba album on the strength of lines like, “*Good scraps come to those who wait / Hand and foot on the investors*”. Now that's some good populist rabble rousing. Weighty subject matter or no, it sounds like a good time was had by all 29 of them in making this album, and that The Gertrudes have had the decency to pass that fun on to the music-buying public.

— By Scott Lingley

Mavis Staples

One True Vine (Anti-)

Over a half-century into a career that strangely boasts only a few highlights against plenty of wasted potential, and singer Mavis Staples might well be doing the best work of her life. We can lay some of this at the

feet of Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, who not only throws four of his own originals (including the shattering *Jesus Wept*) into the pot but also surrounds Staples with sympathetic production that beautifully highlights her instrument. The voice is less brassy than it used to be, subdued in some parts, wise with years on others (*Holy Ghost*) and aching throughout. There's something off-putting about pop songwriters trying their hand at penning gospels in the traditional mode, but Tweedy and Nick Lowe (*Far Celestial Shore*) nail it, giving Staples everything she needs to truly shine. There are plenty of old-school traditionals as well, like *Sow Good Seeds* and *Woke Up This Morning (With My Mind On Jesus)*; a hat is tipped to her dad Pops with his *I Like the*

Things About Me, but a special highlight is Staples killing it on a country-funk version of *Can You Get To That* by Funkadelic that falls somewhere between Graham Central Station and The Band.

— By Tom Murray

Genticorum

Enregistré Live (Les Productions du Moulin)

This is Genticorum's fifth album, a live outing recorded on home turf in Farnham, QC, before a happily partisan crowd. But this is not the typical mid-career-not-sure-what-to-do-next retread of the band's hits that we often see with rock bands, no indeed. Instead we get a thoroughly vital document of the group's performance in as close to a natural setting for their traditionally rooted music as is possible these days. The trio strip down for their live show, Alexandre de Grosbois-Garand leaving the bass at home and concentrating instead on flute and fiddle, which gives the music a wholly lighter feel than on the studio recordings.

The tempos creep up and several of the sets of tunes are positively incendiary (*La Brunante* and *La Finno-Gaspésienne* are cases in point). On *Déline* we are treated to some of the a cappella call-and-response that is a consistent highlight of Genticorum's repertoire. Waltz-



Reviews

es, songs, and more tunes, both trad and original, round out the record, making this a completely satisfying repast.

— By Richard Thornley

Alice Gerrard

Bittersweet (Independent)

Alice Gerrard has been performing longer than most readers of this magazine have been alive. She's a veritable pioneer in the folk world, discovering Appalachian music at a young age, and collaborating with Hazel Dickens in the 1960s and 1970s. She was also well-connected with folk music royalty through marriage with Mike Seeger. She has been honoured in several states and by the International Bluegrass Music Association for her contributions, which include overseeing publication of the

Old-Time Herald.

Now in her late 70s, Gerrard hasn't slowed down a bit. This disc finds her in fine voice, with a collection of fine songs influenced by folk, bluegrass and old-time genres, yet not firmly in any box. Gerrard is a clever songwriter, casting out nuggets about falling in love "just when my boat of life was on an even keel," adding an impeccable sense of melody.

Kudos have to go to Laurie Lewis for the beautiful production, which includes fine harmonies and some of the best pickers in the bluegrass world, including Stuart Duncan, Bryan Sutton and Rob Ickes. While Gerrard might plead to "play me a song I can cry to," this disc will give you every reason to smile.

— By Mike Sadava

David Gogo

Come On Down (Cordova Bay)

Gogo would be the first to admit that he's hardly an overnight success. Yet his rich, 13-disc catalogue has provided the perfect learning curve to arriving at an album as fully realized as *Come On Down*. He's long been a blues player, yet Gogo's always displayed a penchant for smart covers by players who have meant something to him—regardless of genre. He's also long incubated a natural inclination for soul, R&B and gospel and it is these elements that make *Come On Down* such an undeniably strong package. Gogo loves music—his influences whirl around him like so many dervishes—which also accounts for an always-diverse sampling of blues, funk, R&B, gospel and soul, often on the

same release. His vocals can often fall short of his guitar-playing skills—he pushes his voice at times—yet he chooses his material carefully, his vocals becoming a much better fit. A case-in-point is his own *Worth It*, which rings comfortably with a Stax feel, buttressed by the background singing of Amber Handley, Tina Jones, Shelley Beeston and Ken Ermtter. *Natchez Dog* turns over a familiar blues page, with patented Gogo slide and strong harp from Shawn Hall. The slow, slippery *Kings* is pure rock with strong guitar lines that, with the added punch of his backup singers, makes for another comfort zone. Likewise, his hard-rocking *Blue Eyed Daisy* translates to a great driving song. Of special note is the title track, another



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original and as fine an example of Gogo's ability to conjure a mood, injecting a slightly foreboding bayou feel through his use of snaking guitar lines with a touch of tremolo. Given that half this 12-track release is packed with standup original material speaks highly of both what he has learned and where he wants to take it.

– By Eric Thom

Mary Murphy

Honey From Heather (Dove Creek Studios)

Mary Murphy is not only an Irish singer who plays whistles and percussion but also a writer with a novel, *The Emerald Diaries* (with a cover painting and foreword by Will Millar, the founder of the Irish Rovers) and a children's book and CD, *Away With The Fairies*, to her credit. As a vocalist, she has a pleasing, lilting, rhythmic style which fits well with producer/guitarist Paul Keim's playing. Ably backed by Adrian Dolan on accordion, Corwin Fox on banjo, John Hyde on upright bass, Jon May on percussion and drums, and Christina Zaenker on cello, this, her ninth CD, is a tradition Irish record with a contemporary feel. Re-

corded at Dove Creek Studios in the rural Comox Valley on Vancouver Island, it's Irish music with a West Coast vibe. Very pleasant.

– By Barry Hammond

Woody Pines

Rabbits Motel (Hearth Music)

Woody Pines: his website advertises viper jazz, ragtime, and country blues. His record delivers country blues, ragtime, and viper jazz—whatever that is. He does run the gamut, sounding like he's just left Preservation Hall going elsewhere to play some Lead Belly, perhaps at the Grand Ole Opry.

It's engagingly done with humour and energy—a compendium of 10 lovely Americana songs—some traditional and some written. Woody is a dab hand with a story. I loved *Hobo and His Bride*. All I all, a most pleasant experience, staying at the Rabbits Motel.

– By les siemieniuk

Rae Spoon

My Prairie Home (Saved by Radio)

If Rae Spoon's 10th album sounds a bit like a soundtrack at times, well, it is. *My Prairie Home* is a companion piece to an NFB documentary of the same name and finds the Calgarian singer/songwriter/author returning home, literally, to collaborate with musician/producer Lorrie Matheson, and figuratively, as Spoon (whose self-identification as a transgendered artist resists the usual application of pronouns) lyrically revisits the past. Even separated from visuals, it really does feel like a journey through time and space, complete with intercom messages from avuncular bus drivers, instrumental passages swept by whispering prairie winds, and a suitcase full of bittersweet memories, many of which revolve around



Mary Murphy



Kate Reid

Spoon's religious upbringing and eventual break with same (*Amy Grant, God Was On Your Shoulders, I Can't Tear It From Me*).

But does it make for good music? Spoon's fearless blending of folk, rock and electronic elements, unerring ear for a hook and strong-yet-vulnerable delivery of uneasy reflections on the past stand up well as a completely aural experience. Still, it sounds like a cool movie.

– By Scott Lingley

Kate Reid

Queer Across Canada (Independent)

The first thing you hear is the tooting of a train whistle and then whoosh!

Off we go on a ride across the country celebrating the lives of queer families and taking in issues like gender questioning, blended families, surrogate parenthood, donor dads and two mother families along the way.

Conceived as an awareness raising tool to use in the school system and elsewhere, the content is based on stories Kate gathered by interviewing 74 queer adults and their children. Accompanying the music CD

is the Queer Across Canada Musical-Educational Kit which is an educational resource designed for the classroom. It includes activities and exercises designed to promote learning about gender and sexual diversity, homophobia and related issues and to encourage the acceptance of diverse people, families and communities. The only downside of the project is that it is needed at all ... but make no mistake about it, we all still have a lot of work to do to get rid of the bullying and victimization that so many folks from queer-headed households have to endure. Music as a force for social change?

That, my friends, is folk music at its best!

– By Tim Readman

Ben Sures

Son Of Trouble (Independent)

Born in Winnipeg, Ben Sures is a Canadian singer/songwriter and roots artist who has honed his craft over six previous records, including the acclaimed previous disc *Gone To Bolivia*. A regular on CBC's *Irrelevant Show*, he's composed music for TV and film and was the winner in 2005 of the John Lennon Song Writing Competition in

Reviews

JAMES COTTON

Cotton Mouth Man

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the Folk category. This latest effort, *Son Of Trouble*, continues in his quick-witted, quirky, and irreverent tradition but is a bit of a departure in that it's a blues record. He does a few covers: Blind Lemon Jefferson's *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean*, Mali singer and guitarist Boubacar Traoré's *Je Chanterai Pour Toi* and Cuban close harmony group Los Zafiro's *La Luna En Tu Mirada* (the latter two showcase his language skills in French and Spanish), but the rest are all originals. Sures is a surprisingly good blues guitar player and all the songs are tight, compact, and well-edited. *Where Are They Now*, *Love Will Kick Your Ass* and *The 99*, which seems to be a blues ode to Wayne Gretzky and a labour song, all stand out. Produced by Don Kerr of Rheostatics fame, the disc sounds crisp and the vocals close and intimate. All in all, it's another feather in the cap for the redoubtable Sures.

— By Barry Hammond

Deep Dark Woods

Jubilee (Six Shooter/Sugar Hill)

"I sure like California, I could leave on the next plane" sings Deep Dark Woods frontman Ryan Boldt on *18th of December*, the second track on the Saskatoon band's fifth full release, *Jubilee*. It's clear that both he and his band mates mean it, though the California they'd like to get back to is of a specific time and place: late '60s/early '70s Laurel Canyon: Byrds, Neil Young, Buffalo Springfield. This isn't a new affinity that they've developed; over the course of their recording history it's been a readily apparent reference point, along with Woodstock (specifically The Band), and while producer Jonathan Wilson may have helped draw it out a little more it's not as though the group are making a huge break from their usual sound. Instead, they're extending the sonic palette with more emphasis on vintage keyboards, draped like damask over slow,

sombre reflections (*I Took to Whoring*, *Picture on my Wall*) and jaunty-but-sombre reflections (*Red, Red Rose*), aches as common to musicians from Saskatchewan as they are from California. They pull this off quite nicely, partially because these are some of the strongest songs yet from the band, partially because of the uniformly excellent playing (love the Rick Danko-style bass) and careful arrangements. The most immediately gratifying tune (*Miles and Miles*) is positioned at the beginning, but keep in mind this one is a grower — the best songs will spring at you over time.

— By Tom Murray

James Cotton

Cotton Mouth Man (Alligator)

When you realize James Cotton's been belting out his own distinctive, high-energy brand of the blues for nigh onto 77 years, it's a marvel that he can still inspire a party. But party this! — with an invitation list transforming this

Reviews

this release by the near-oc-togenarian into one of the strongest blues albums of the year.

The combination of Darrell Nulisch's vocals, Joe Bonamassa's guitar and Cotton's runaway locomotive of a harp give his title track/ theme song its blistering beginnings. Cotton's squeak of an spoken intro into *Midnight Train* only sets up the fresh vocals of Gregg Allman, while once-Brother Chuck Leavell and his piano teams with Tom Holland's guitar to lift Cotton's unholy blasts of harp ever-skyward. K'eb Mo' turns in a lovely, slow blues ballad with *Mississippi Mud*, carving out some space for Cotton's solo, while *He Was There* continues to add more pages to the legend's history book, compliments of Nulisch. Yet it's the youthful fire of Warren Haynes who brings in one of the greatest tracks with *Something For Me*, a dark boogie with its distorted vocal intro, followed by Haynes's great vocal and lethal leads. Ruthie Foster's vocals on *Wrapped Around My Heart* only underline what is already

known about her gifts. Yet, it's the Nulisch-Cotton chemistry which charts new territory with *Saint On Sunday* and, again, with the tongue-in-cheek, uptempo *Young Bold Women*, set against Leavell's bubbly B3. The closing *Bonnie Blue*, featuring a vocal and harmonica from Cotton, joined only by Colin Linden, leaves us with a painful-sounding reminder of the toll cancer has taken on the great man (although you wouldn't know it from his undiminished harp strengths). It's the only soft spot on what is otherwise a pile-driving reminder of how good the blues can be and Cotton's prestigious role in what the genre has become all these years later.

— By Eric Thom

Rita Hosking

Little Boat (Independent)

Hypnotizing Americana from former California history teacher Rita Hosking, located somewhere between Gillian Welch and Iris DeMent. Hosking has a supple voice, one that can inhabit the various hard scrabble characters she writes about, in songs

where they're scrubbing hardwood floors (*Clean*) or lamenting the loss of jobs in a dead-end town (*Five Star Location*.) You can easily fall for the stripped-back Dobro, banjo, and guitar sound that frames the stories in this seven-song EP, but what makes it all work is Hosking's exquisite musical taste; she leaves the drama in the lyrics, doesn't overplay her vocal talents, opts for subtle where other songwriters hammer a point home. She's charming as hell, too, especially on *Where Time Is Reigning*, teaming up with her teenage daughter (on clawhammer banjo) to deliver one of the sweetest songs you'll ever hear. A five-star album if ever there was one.

— By Tom Murray

James Hunter Six

Minute By Minute (Fantasy/Concord)

If James Hunter was no longer with us, he'd be the name to drop amongst fans of early R&B and soul—such is the quality of his work. Fortunately, he's very much alive and, after a five-year hiatus from recording (he's a tireless tourmeister but, this time out, endured some heartbreaking family events), Hunter returns with one of his most outstanding records, and certainly well worth the wait. And if you find yourself blown away by the sophisticated calibre of his delivery, his suave, soulful vocals, stinging guitar work and inimitable timing, you should be fully impressed by the



Rita Hosking



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fact that each of these 12 songs are his own original compositions.

Add to this the impressive yet subtle power of his band and this record takes on a life of its own—bristling with newfound confidence and refreshed intensity. From the audible pain of *Heartbreak* to the irresistible charm and sincerity of *If I Only Knew*, Hunter is reborn as an artist with a firm grasp of his talents, surrounded by the players who give him just enough space to make the most of their expertise. The James Hunter Six is not only firing on all cylinders, it should provide Hunter with the major traction that has sadly eluded him for too long.

— By Eric Thom

Tim Williams

Blue Highway (LowdenProud Records)

As Williams notes, the *Blue Highway* is more a state of mind than it is an actual destination, yet it's a road that, as Williams has travelled it for almost 50 years, he owns. The longtime travelling troubadour and all-round acoustic bluesman has an

impeccable reputation for his deep blues roots and the exceptional calibre of his guitar playing. From the big guitar sound he achieves on the title track to the Hawaiian-sounding twist of *The Lei Vendor's Song*, Williams proves a master of his instrument, revealing a refreshingly open-minded view of the genre. From traditional blues like *Blues Like Showers of Rain* to his non-traditional treatment of Stephen Foster's *Hard Times*, saturated with slide, Williams is clearly a student of the world who has learned his lessons well.

Similar to Paul Geremia and with a singing voice—and philosophy—similar to Geoff Muldaur, Williams is a passionate and knowledgeable blues figure who deserves to be celebrated and cherished. This accomplished release is proof of the depth of his blues-folk roots, his overall authenticity and his overall significance within the blues community—but he seems to prefer a low profile.

— By Eric Thom

The False Beards

Ankle (Ghosts From The Basement)

The False Beards are *fRoots* editor Ian Anderson and played-with-just-about-everybody Ben Mandelson. On this release they revisit Anderson's back catalogue and other eclectic favourites, including Stones and Cake covers and a song collected by Ralph Vaughan Williams from Anderson's great-grandmother.

It's all appealing stuff and both players are exceedingly good at what they do, steeped in the traditions from which their songs draw (self-described "old-time English psych folk blues"). Derroll Adams's *The Sky* and Anderson's own *A Sign of the Times* fare particularly well, evoking the parallels drawn between this release and Ronnie Lane's classic *Rough Mix* by another reviewer. And if in places the mix and Anderson's singing get a little thin, these are minor blemishes on what is otherwise a pretty fun outing.

— By Richard Thornley



The False Beards: Ben Mandelson & Ian Anderson

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Reviews



The Paul McKenna Band

The Paul McKenna Band

Elements (Greentrax/Compass)

This is the third Paul McKenna Band release and it's the best one yet. There's some sparkling performances here – especially from McKenna himself on vocals and guitar and recent addition Mike Vass on banjo and fiddle. There's also plenty of fine playing from David McNee on bouzouki and tenor guitar; Sean Gray on flute, whistles and guitar and Ewan Baird on bodhran.

There's some strong original songs such as the opener *Lonely Man* and the gentle flute inflected *Mother Nature*. The traditional song *Mickey Dam* is a robust tale of Irish navvies working in Scotland. One of the highlights is a stunning rendition of James Keelaghan's *Cold Missouri Waters*, which brings the drama and poignancy of the song into sharp focus. There's also a great version of Nic Jones' song *Ruins by the Shore* and a live version of Walt Aldridge's *No Ash Will Burn*. This is a gutsy and passionate album which is deserving of a good listen.

– By Tim Readman

Dustin Bentall & the Smokes

You Are an Island (Aporia Records)

Dustin Bentall's *Orion* EP made my favourite releases of 2012 and *You Are an Island* is a ridiculously great sequel. An organic mix of roots and rock ingredients, every song exemplifies Bentall's masterful grasp of North American idioms. Take the album opener, *Every Chord That Rings*: classic Canadian top-down that bridges country and rock and should prove equally appealing to audiences of either inclination. *Just Be My Friend*, with its gently expansive message, shows Dustin's more than just a barroom philosopher. Ryan Dahle's production leaves plenty of grit in the mix and Kendel Carson's fiddle is a shape-shifting wraith throughout. The emotional heart of the record comes not from the title track but one of the closers, *Oxford Street*. The bastard grandchild of *Dead Man's Curve*, it shimmies in with hand-tooled honky tonk then sucker punches you like the street punk it really is. Tight, incisive songwriting with hooks a-plenty; more please.

– By Richard Thornley

The Jerry Cans

Nunavuttitut (Independent)

Nunavut's Jerry Cans are everything that a regional band should be, looking around the neighbourhood for song ideas rather than attempting to blend in with everyone else. They name drop specific locales (*Iqaluit*), rage against corporate grocery chains that they feel are rip offs (*Northmart*), even slap down a well-known animal rights organization (*Dear PETA*) for messing with the local economy. They're all over the map musically, testing reggae rhythms against fiddle strains, using folk, rock, and even some throat singing to get across a point of view that's often overlooked or ignored in the rest of Canada. It's a little like what would happen if The Clash had grown up speaking Inuktitut in Nunavut; somewhat clichéd at points, but definitely a one-of-a-kind band.

– By Tom Murray

RéVeillons!

À la chasse pour chasser (Scorbut)

There's a wonkiness to RéVeillons!' sound, as if something's ever-so-slightly out of tune. I've puzzled over this for a

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Reviews

long time and the only thing I can think is that fiddler Richard Forest is using an old-fashioned natural tuning rather than the more modern equal temperament tuning. Whatever the reason, the end result provides a distinctive "earthiness", particularly on songs where David Berthiaume's slab of a voice is also on display. As always a mix of the traditional and original, this third album for the group may seem a little rough and ready next to the output of groups like Le Vent du Nord, but to some it will have more of an air of authenticity and perhaps greater appeal as a result. With its songs of derring-do and typically propulsive sets of tunes, there's nothing not to love here.

— By Richard Thornley

Rachelle Van Zanten

Oh Mother (RVZ Music)

Rachelle Van Zanten and I have something in common: we both lost our mothers this past year. It's a life-changing moment, and she has marked it with her third solo release since leaving Edmonton's alt-rockers Painting Daisies in 2006. The new CD contains a series of songs for her mother, and celebrating the fight to protect the sacred headwaters of the Tahltan People in Northern B.C., which are threatened by oil pipelines and other industrial megaprojects. It was produced and engineered by Victoria's Joby Baker, who was previously worked with Alex Cuba, Mae Moore and Cowboy Junkies. Rachelle

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is best known for her scorching hot slide guitar work and spiritually infused lyrics. She recently performed solo at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, more than merely holding her own alongside such luminaries as Dave Alvin, Karan Casey, David Francey, and Michael Jerome Browne.

On the new CD she was inspired by and collaborated with First Nations artist/activist Roy Henry Vickers, explorer Wade Davis, and the Tahltan women who blockaded Shell to protect their homeland and those sacred waters. Songs like *I Fight For Life*, and *My Troubled Town* reflect this ongoing fight, while *The Canoe Song* even includes a speech from one of the women. These songs are not whiney, preachy songs, but soulful, heartfelt anthems delivered in her uniquely pleasing voice and accompanied by her tasteful side guitar work.

This is a powerful album, transcending the sense of loss of her mother, encompassing the trials of her own motherhood while she made this recording, and standing as a testament to those who will not let industry and greed destroy her homeland and our sacred waters.

— By Steve Edge

The Sadies

Internal Sounds (Outside)

The alt-country Toronto-based band The Sadies, with brothers Dallas and Travis Good, Sean Dean, and Mike Belitsky, have released their tenth studio album, *Internal Sounds*. In addition to their own recordings, The Sadies have collaborated with other artists, such as Blue Rodeo, Jon Langford and Gord Downie. They have also recorded, written and toured extensively as the backing band for Neko Case, Jon Spencer and



John Doe. *Internal Sounds* is a brilliant follow-up to their 2010 *Darker Circles*. The 11-track *Internal Sounds*, nine fabulous originals and two wonderful covers, including *We are Circling*, a haunting adaption and performance with Buffy Sainte-Marie.

Internal Sounds is rich with lavish guitar layering from the Good brothers, clever instrumentation that resonates between traditional country to ripping fuzz-drenched garage '60s rock. *Internal Sounds* showcases the energy and complexity of The Sadies. From the heartbreak twang of *So Much Blood* to the rocking *The First 5 Minutes*, *Internal Sounds* is a terrific listen!

— By Phil Harries

Jessica Rhaye

Far Gone Lullabies (Jessica Rhaye Music)

From St. John, NB, Jessica Rhaye works the fertile folk/pop/country ground somewhere west of The Waifs and east of a young Cindy Church. There are a number of impressive co-writes on the ambitious *Far Gone Lullabies*, including *You Know Me Better*, on which Rhaye shares credit with the righteous Ron Sexsmith. Astutely and, at times, lavishly produced, this, her third release, includes an appearance by the celebrated Saint John String Quartet and Grammy

Award-winning, multi-instrumentalist Gordie Sampson, and it certainly raises the possibility that Rhaye's career could take off in several directions. With a winsome, powerful voice, she has the ability to tackle the country market with the well-groomed *On My Mind for a While* and *Ice Flow*. There's the pop-smart of *Sleepwalk* and *Little Folk Song* and even a wonderful and refreshing take on Ian Tyson's old chestnut *Four Strong Winds*. Do watch this space.

— By Roddy Campbell

My Sweet Patootie

Good Day (Independent)

I admit I was a bit leery when I saw the name My Sweet Patootie but my misgivings disappeared as soon as I started listening to this disc. This trio

from the Niagara area packs more chops than Canada Packers. Fiddle player Sandra Swannell, who is also a classical viola player, has obviously listened to a lot of Stephane Grappelli, while Terry Young is a fingerpickin' god on the guitar.

They're at their best when they're having fun and swinging, such as in *Whistling and Jangling* or *Company's Coming*. As veterans of Tanglefoot, Sewell and Young also have a credible Celtic pedigree.

I was a little disappointed that the Patootie chose some overdone standards, including *How High the Moon*, which is, well, passable but nowhere near the masterpiece that Les Paul and Mary Ford created a half-century ago.

— By Mike Sadava



Reviews

James Findlay, Bella Hardy, Brian Peters & Lucy Ward

The Liberty To Choose (Fellside)

Turn back the clocks to 1959, to the eve of the folk song revival and the halcyon days of the CND and such. *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* had just been published. Edited by Ralph Vaughan-Williams, it contained 75 songs, and the following year A.L. (Bert) Lloyd released an LP and an EP of 19 of those songs. Lloyd was a major influence upon a young Martin Carthy in those days, and the songs included such staples of English song as *Geordie*, *The Outlandish Knight*, *Ye Mariners All*, and *A Sailor's Life*. Fast forward to 2013 and we find a new, expanded edition of the *Penguin* book, with 151 songs. I

was suspicious of the new CD, wondering if it was merely a re-working of the songs from Bert Lloyd's LP. I was encouraged to see that two of the finest young singers of our time, Lucy Ward and Bella Hardy, were on it, so I downloaded the CD. I was not disappointed! Here we find 16 songs, with just one repeated title and an introduction to the work of young James Findlay and the versatility of the more seasoned folkie, Brian Peters. Findlay sings in a pleasingly rough-edged vocal style and plays fiddle and guitar. Hardy and Ward both hail from Derbyshire. The former is a superb fiddler and, like Findlay, is a BBC Young Tradition Award winner. I saw Lucy Ward at the Folk Alliance in Toronto and was blown away by her singing.

Peters is a gifted multi-in-



strumentalist (anglo concertina, melodeon, mandolin, and guitar) so we have here a pretty nifty band as well as a collection of great soloists.

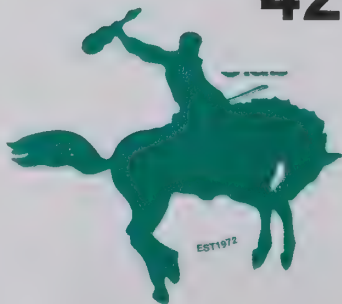
The songs range from the familiar (*Barbara Allen*, *Claudy Banks*, *Bonny Light Horseman*, *The Seeds Of Love*—which

was the first folk song heard by Cecil Sharp in the late 1890s, inspiring him to start collecting) to the more obscure (*The Molecatcher*, *Faithful Sailor Boy*), and includes many other variants of such stalwart folk songs as *The Female Highwayman* (or *Sovay/Sylvie*), *The Hungry Fox* (and the little ones ate all the bones-o), and *The Baffled Knight* (Eliza Carthy's *Blow The Winds from Red Rice*.) In fact, *The Baffled Knight* is a great lead-off track, which encourages the listener to delve deeper, with the full ensemble in rollicking form and a great storyline. The rest of the album is a bit more like hard work, but well worth it for the folk enthusiast and anyone looking for new material from the annals of the folk tradition.
— By Steve Edge

The Calgary Folk Club Welcomes you to our 42nd Season 2013 - 2014



Valdy
Sept 27/13



Gordie MacKeeman
Oct 11/13



Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem
Feb 14/14



Arrogant Worms
March 14/14

Sept 13: Kevin Welch and Eliza Gilkyson Sept 27: Valdy
Oct 11: Gordie MacKeeman Oct 25: Ian Sherwood
Nov 8 and 9: CFMA Nonimee Showcases Nov 22: Lunch at Allen's
Jan 17: Kim and Reggie Harris Jan 31: Crooked Brothers, Del Barber, Cara Luft
Feb 14: Rani Argo and daisy mayhem Feb 28: Ellis Paul Mar 14: Arrogant Worms
March 28: Stephen Fearing and Andy White April 11: Riders in the Sky

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Chasseurs de Trad'

Réveillons! a fouillé l'antre obscur de la musique traditionnelle du passé de Québec. Leur dernier album *À la chasse pour chasser* prend un virage plus commun, mais plus singulier également. Yves Bernard les trouve vraiment unique dans leur genre. Réveillons!

Ils incarnent le folklore pur et dur. Indépendants dans tous les sens du terme, ils se tiennent en marge du trad plus léché et leurs quatre membres sont uniques dans leur genre: un chanteur avec une voix perdue dans le temps, un violoneux qui vient de la danse, un percussionniste gigueur calleur et un guitariste au son terreux, très proche de la tradition. À l'été, ils ont lancé *à la chasse pour chasser*, un troisième disque plus dansant aux propos moins sombres que *Malbrough n'est pas mort*, le précédent.

« On s'est aperçu que le répertoire de *Malbrough* passait plus difficilement sur les scènes extérieures. On devait le garder pour les salles, alors que dans les festivals, on jouait les pièces du premier. Elles

brassaient plus », raconte Jean-François Berthiaume, le percussionniste, gigueur et calleur du groupe.

Sur *Malbrough n'est pas mort*, Réveillons! pouvait chanter la misère humaine sur le ton de la berceuse, causer de guerre, de mort et de politique ou célébrer la guimbarde avec profondeur, même si on faisait aussi swinger des chansons tristes ou grincer des reels. Le nouveau disque *à la chasse pour chasser* est différent, plus drôle et avec une touché plus populaire, sans être plus pop : « Pourquoi ce titre? C'est parce qu'on s'est rendu compte en cours de route qu'on cherche toujours à prendre le bijou de chanson, à le dépoussiérer et à le rendre à notre manière. Mais c'est aussi intéressant de conserver une chanson bien connue comme *Pour boire, il faut vendre* et nous l'approprier », pense David Berthiaume, chanteur et frère de Jean-François.

Ils sont en effet à la chasse pour chasser, y allant directement, du point «a» au point «b», sans se soucier d'ajouter des arrangements sophistiqués. David poursuit : « On ne veut pas faire de musique trop raffinée.

Pour moi, le meilleur c'est encore Isidore Soucy, tout seul avec ses pieds et son violon. C'est quelque chose d'assez brut. La musique traditionnelle, c'est pas toujours harmonieux et moi j'aime ça quand ça grinche un peu. C'est pour ça qu'on détonne un peu. On va chercher une certaine agressivité qui est dans la tradition ».

La voix de David est au moins aussi typée que celles de Gervais Lessard du *Rêve du Diable*, de Philippe Jetté de Belzébuth ou d'Antoine Gauthier des *Chaqueurs à pieds*. Il l'a tient de son grand-père qu'il a très peu connu. On dirait une voix figée dans le temps et qui ne laisse personne indifférent. Au Québec, on aime ou on n'aime pas, mais cela semble être différent aux États-Unis : « Les Américains sont habitués à des voix qui transportent de fortes personnalités, des gens comme Kenny Rogers, Dylan ou plusieurs autres du monde du folk », soutient Jean-François.

JF vient de la danse. Tout jeune, il voulait faire du breakdancing, à l'instar de... Michael Jackson. Puis son père lui a trouvé une troupe folklorique qui faisait de la danse russe. La responsable leur a dit : « Ça devrait convenir, tu vas apprendre des acrobaties qui te serviront pour le breakdance ». Il a commencé comme ça, dans les *Pieds légers* de Laval, puis a fini par utiliser la gigue comme un instrument, avant de transposer les rythmes de la gigue sur les tambours.

JF est également reconnu comme calleur de grande originalité. Il tient cela d son oncle Paul André : « J'aime faire des figures inventées en callant. Au lieu de dire « deux par deux, promenade! » comme les autres, je vais rajouter « pis on s'en va là-dessus » et je vais rapper. C'est une vieille façon de caller. Les Américains faisaient ça aussi. Ils chantaient un peu sur l'air en donnant des consignes précises. Moi j'invente un peu de poésie », dit-il.

À chaque fois qu'ils le peuvent, les gars de Réveillons! jouent pour la danse : « Il y a beaucoup moins de gens qui dansent qu'il y en a qui écoutent la musique traditionnelle. C'est pour ça qu'on se fait toujours un point d'honneur d'introduire la danse le plus possible pendant nos spectacles », ajoute David. À ce chapitre, le violoneux Richard Forest est un pilier, un vrai de vrai avec des oncles musiciens à Saint-Gabriel-de-Brandon, fait sur mesure pour les

veillées, un bon marathonien qui peut jouer pendant des heures, dans la tradition du swing direct et non de la partition, qui a appris ses classiques, d'Isidore Soucy à Jos Bouchard et à Philippe Bruneau.

Il a commencé à jouer le violon sur le tard vers l'âge de vingt ans, parce qu'il croyait que l'instrument était réservé aux aînés. Il a appris rapidement et on le considère aujourd'hui comme l'un des grands de sa génération. Ce que confirme Stéphanie Lépine, elle-même excellente violoneuse qui passe chez Jean-François pendant l'entrevue: « Son style est franc et velouté, son jeu est authentique avec un swing dynamique. Il y a quelque chose d'enveloppant et de réconfortant dans son jeu. Un grand cru! ». Il peut faire sonner son instrument à l'ancienne, donner dans les airs croches, frotter les cordes, jouer rythmique et attaquer vigoureusement les reels, pendant que de son côté, le nouveau guitariste André Gagné rille, fait les bourdons, double les autres et accompagne avec énergie.

Son style est plus brut que celui de Marc Maziade, le précédent, qui mène dorénavant à bon port les destinées du groupe Maz. « André a beaucoup de rythmique et il est plus comme le monde de la tradition. C'est dur à expliquer, mais lui, c'est sûr qu'il a un son qui vient de Saint-Côme dans Lanaudière. Il a une puissance typique, un peu comme les frères Beaudry. Pour ce gens-là, ça ne sert à rien de faire 12,000

accords, tu en fais un, mais tu fais le bon », dit JF.

Sur le disque à la chasse pour chasser, la simplicité est reine. Une polka est suivie d'un reel, une chanson à répondre devient très percussive, Isidore Soucy est maintenu dans une forme traditionnelle et une valse atmosphérique est jouée tout doucement. La musique va droit au but.

L'amour fait mal

Les cœurs brisés donnent de bons albums, par exemple, le dernier de Cara Luft, Darlingford, dont les sources d'inspiration varient entre les Everly Brothers et la chanson folk traditionnelle anglaise. Pat Langston fait les présentations.

C'est une chose d'écrire et d'enregistrer un album sur la fin d'une histoire d'amour quand la douleur est encore vive. Dans un tel cas, l'expérience nous dicte la façon de composer et de chanter chaque chanson. Qu'en est-il quand la douleur est derrière soi?

En 2012, Cara Luft sort *Darlingford*, son meilleur album solo depuis son départ des Wailin' Jennys, qui parle d'une rupture amoureuse survenue soudainement deux ans plus tôt. Huit ans après avoir co-fondé le populaire trio folk canadien en 2004,

Cara Luft explore les fluctuations post-ruptures de ses émotions personnelles et raconte ses autres préoccupations. Elle dit que son point de vue sur plusieurs de ces chansons a évolué, fait non surprenant.

It's Gonna Be Alright, par exemple, parlait de sa détermination à continuer à vivre sa vie malgré un cœur sévèrement brisé. Puis, plus tôt cet été... « J'étais en tournée en Angleterre quand j'ai entendu parler des inondations dans le sud de l'Alberta. Je viens de Calgary. Alors, quand j'ai commencé à chanter cette chanson, je pensais à Calgary, et même si ce n'était pas le sujet initial de la chanson, j'ai continué à garder Calgary en tête. En fait, c'est une bonne chanson pour se rappeler que ça va bien aller quand on passe au travers de tels événements. »

En d'autres mots, l'auteure-interprète a fait exactement ce que les spectateurs font : interpréter des chansons selon leur propre perspective changeante. À 39 ans, Cara Luft dit qu'elle savait qu'elle devait écrire un album sur la rupture. Ça bien sûr, c'est le rôle de l'artiste : que ce soit par le moyen d'une chanson, d'une peinture ou d'un roman, il dépeint les moments les plus intenses de la vie, en allant dans l'endroit de la psyché où l'on s'observe soi-même objectivement même si l'on est détruit par l'émotion.

Cara a reçu de l'aide dans le département de l'objectivité de la part du compositeur/producteur Lewis Melville, originaire de Guelph, qui s'est vu attribuer le mérite de la co-écriture de la moitié des chansons sur l'album, dont *It's Gonna Be Alright*. « Je ne voulais pas être seule à me complaire dans la misère et à me regarder le nombril », blague Cara Luft. « J'ai pensé que ce serait une bonne idée d'écrire en collaboration avec quelqu'un qui pourrait m'aider à écrire sur les éléments personnels, mais aussi les éléments universels. Alors j'ai demandé à Lewis de grimper à bord. »

La sensibilité de Lewis est mise au jour sur des chansons comme *Bye Bye Love*. En fait, il en a écrit une bonne partie après que Luft ait bloqué sur les paroles. Quiconque a aimé et a perdu l'être chéri se sent immédiatement interpellé par le contenu conflictuel de la chanson. D'un côté, la protagoniste sait qu'elle doit avancer et passer à d'autre chose. D'un autre côté, elle n'y est pas encore et il n'est pas certain qu'elle croit



être capable d'y arriver un jour.

On pourrait voir la chanson comme une sorte de suite au vieux classique des Everly Brothers dans lequel les deux compagnons sont tout simplement enfoncés dans le fond du baril de la rupture sans penser une seconde qu'ils pourraient en sortir un jour. La texture musicale de la chanson de Luft, qui met à contribution Jesse Zubot au violon et Keri Latimer aux harmonies vocales, s'accorde avec les couches d'émotion et de rationalité superposées exprimées par les paroles.

Tirée de la chanson, la phrase *I can see how love can make you blind* réinvente le cliché selon lequel l'amour est aveugle en évoquant deux réalités. « On veut être aveuglé par l'amour parce qu'ainsi, on n'a pas de souci, c'est comme l'innocence », affirme Luft, avec le recul dont elle bénéficie aujourd'hui. « Mais quand on se fait blesser, on s'écrit : "Oh, fuck! J'étais vraiment aveugle!" La vie est pleine de yin et de yang. »

La création des auteurs, dont la sienne, permet souvent d'acquérir une vision plus objective des événements profondément personnels, remarque Luft. Elle est consciente du fait qu'elle écrit en partie dans le but de mettre les choses en perspective, ce qu'elle ne réalisait pas quand elle avait 20 ans. « J'ai compris ça avec l'expérience, en apprenant. »

Le titre de l'album fait référence à la petite communauté du Manitoba; de nombreuses pistes ont été enregistrées dans une vieille église, et les chansons sur *Darlingford* ne s'inspirent pas toutes de la vie amoureuse fracturée de la chanteuse. The *Ploughboy and the Cockney*, par exemple, ainsi que *He Moved Through the Fair* sont des airs traditionnels. « J'ai été élevée par des amateurs de folk », précise Luft.

Portland Town, de Derroll Adams, pleure les pertes engendrées par la guerre. *Dallaire* traite des expériences crève-cœurs du général canadien, maintenant sénateur, Roméo Dallaire quand il dirigeait les opérations de maintien de la paix inefficaces des Nations Unies pendant le génocide au Rwanda de 1994. Luft a envoyé une copie de l'album à monsieur Dallaire. Silence radio. Puis elle reçoit une lettre. « Il m'a remerciée. Il n'a pas donné beaucoup de détails, mais il a été très courtois. » La vie continue, Roméo Dallaire et Cara Luft le



savent, et chacun d'entre nous trouve sa propre manière de se pousser à avancer. Nous ne sommes pas étonnés d'apprendre que la musique joue un rôle central dans la progression de Luft.

House on Fire, co-écrite avec Lewis Melville, raconte en détails comment elle en est venue à habiter chez son amie Miriam après la rupture. L'amitié l'a aidée à voir plus clair dans la crise, mais on se doute bien que sa compagne de voyage la plus chère, celle sur qui elle peut toujours compter, reste la musique... *Je suis donc allée chez Miriam / Juste moi et mon banjo*, chante-t-elle dans les dernières paroles. Ça fait déjà trois ans que ça s'est passé et le sentieux en nous veut savoir si Luft et l'amour ont recommencé à se parler. « Je ne suis pas prête à entrer dans une nouvelle relation amoureuse », dit-elle. « Mais, j'aimerais ça être aimée encore », ajoute-t-elle après avoir marqué une pause.

Ce qui l'occupe maintenant c'est de préparer sa tournée. « Il faut que je me prévois une période de répit! », s'exclame-t-elle, en faisant référence à son horaire chargé, qui lui prendra l'été et l'automne. « J'adore partir en tournée, mais il faut que je me calme. Je me demande comment je pourrais faire pour rester plus qu'une nuit au même endroit tout en étant en tournée. » La stabilité semble l'attirer de plus en plus, d'ailleurs, elle se prépare à écrire un nouvel album. « Je veux écrire sur le thème du chez-soi. J'en suis à une étape de ma vie où je veux habiter dans un endroit stable. »

Genticorum

Enregistré Live (Les Productions du Moulin)

Le cinquième album de Genticorum, qui existe depuis quelques années déjà, a été enregistré live dans leur patelin à Farnham, Québec, devant une foule joyeusement gagnée d'avance. Heureusement leurs chansons ne sentent pas le « on est au milieu de notre carrière et on n'est plus sûr de ce qu'il faut faire », comme c'est trop souvent le cas avec les groupes de rock qui recyclent les airs de leurs vieux classiques. Non pas du tout. Au lieu de ça, l'enregistrement de leur prestation déborde de vitalité et se situe au plus près de ce qui est naturel comme forme pour la musique traditionnelle de nos jours. Le trio s'est mis à nu pour donner son spectacle, Alexandre de Grosbois-Garand a laissé sa basse à la maison pour se concentrer sur la flûte et le violon, qui donnent à la musique plus de légèreté que sur leurs enregistrements en studio. Les tempos s'accroissent et plusieurs ensembles de chansons mettent le feu, dans le sens positif. « *La Brunante* » et « *La Finno-Gaspésienne* » en sont de bons exemples. Avec « *Déline* », on nous sert des éléments a capella du répertoire de chansons à répondre de Genticorum, un de leurs points forts depuis toujours. Des valse, des chansons et des airs, traditionnels ou originaux, complètent ce festin qui nous satisfait totalement et pour longtemps.

– Par Richard Thornley

– Traduit par Véronique Garneau-Allard



Colin Irwin laments today's lack of meaningful lyricists and poses the question: "Where are the intelligent, well-argued, dissenting songs to stir the blood?"

Does anyone care about lyrics anymore? I merely ask because that mischievous little scamp Robert Zimmerman was recently interviewed by *Rolling Stone* magazine and essentially rubbished his own myth, accusing himself of a 50-year "hoax" on the public. "Apparently Lincoln was wrong," he said, "you can fool the people all the time," and went on to self-deprecatingly dissect the lyrics to *Subterranean Homesick Blues*...

"Don't wanna be a bum / You better chew gum / The pump don't work / 'Cause the vandals took the handles...' I just made up simple rhymes. Any child could have done what I did..."

Yeah right, Bob...

How about, 'You put a gun in my hand and you hide from my eyes / And you turn and run faster when the fast bullets fly' (*Masters Of War*)? Could a child have written that? And pray tell, Bob, why is it as fiercely relevant today as the day it was written five decades ago?

Bob's aversion to that whole 'prophet in our times/spokesman for a generation' persona repeatedly draped over him is well known, of course, and—whether joking or not—denigrating his own classic catalogue is understandable. "I never wanted to be a saviour or a prophet," he says now. "Elvis, maybe ... but a prophet, no."

His lyrics were analyzed within an inch of their lives and some of the interpretations were so ludicrous and outlandish, you had to laugh. But lyrics wielded a significance then that seems sadly absent now and I don't quite understand why.

In those heady days of the 1960s, folk music was tailored as the music of the people with an axe to grind and a fierce couplet to sharpen it with. But, like any movement that inadvertently gains populism, the protest era was swiftly hijacked by the money men and Dylan—the would-be Elvis—quickly fled his own shadow.

In the ensuing decades, it fell to other genres to grab the mantle of dissent. Punk briefly terrorized the music industry with a scattergun assault of spit and sloganeering; reggae contained its fair share of indignation and fury; and the intrinsic anger of rap and hip-hop may have justified its occasional reference as a modern idiom of folk song if occasional casual sexism and homophobia hadn't clouded the issue.

So where are the intelligent, well-argued, dissenting songs to stir the blood and make us study the mirror today? Gone in a black hole created by Simon Cowell and his miserable dollar making factory of *X Factor* sycophants probably. When one of the most beautiful and mysterious songs of all time—Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah*—is destroyed overnight by an impossibly insensitive barrage of R&B histrionics by a reality TV show winner, you despair. No Simon, you don't really care for music, d'ya?

The damage is for all to see in the formulaic environment of a music industry being strangled by the sweaty hands of accountants demanding hit songs and demanding them NOW, with everybody copying one another to get them. OK, here we are championing a purer alternative of folk, roots and world music and perhaps think we're immune to all that trash, but generic blandness isn't merely the curse of the populism.

The Internet age has supposedly liberated us with its seductive opportunity for choice and diversity and by now you'd expect it to have laid the foundations of a cultural revolution comprehensively crushing the establishment's stale old values to usher in a brave new world of originality, substance and musical courage. I don't see it happening. The Internet just means that every joker who ever learned guitar chords now has a platform and an apparent right to believe in their own fantasies, and the web is winding up as a massive junk shop of musical mediocrity.

Even those with genuine talent prepared

to pursue the old-fashioned route seem brainwashed. You'd imagine a world getting messier by the second with its scary catalogue of human disaster, societal ills and miscarriages of justice would provide endless ammunition for today's thinking troubadours to conjure up songs of a lyrical savagery that would make Dylan's most powerful work sound like chicken feed. Yet any future student of social culture analyzing the period would struggle to get any sense of the times from this musical soundtrack.

The English songwriter Chris Wood—never short of a song starkly addressing the ills of the nation—says, "I don't understand why, when young people see so much misery, injustice and shite around them, they don't see music as an expression of disgruntlement. Where are the young protest singers? Instead, we get this limp, bedroom ukulele music that keeps turning up on mobile phone ads."

Not that there's anything intrinsically wrong with Mumford & Sons and the like, but he has a point...

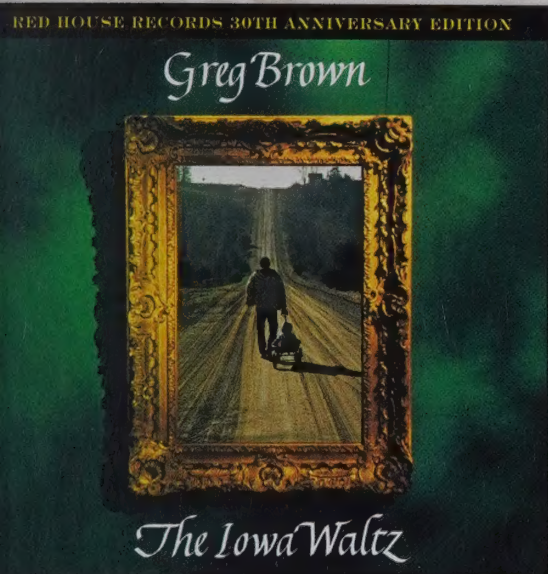
They may say why bother? Music can't change the world, can it? Can it? Well, maybe not directly but it can play a significant role. Don't tell me that Country Joe & The Fish belting out the sardonic chorus to *Fixin' To Die Rag* didn't rally a generation of students to campaign against the folly of the Vietnam War. Don't tell me the Special AKA's international hit *Free Nelson Mandela* didn't give succour to Mandela's long walk to freedom. Don't tell me Dylan's *Hurricane* didn't focus a game-changing spotlight on the injustice of Reuben Carter's imprisonment (even if Dylan himself later shamefully turned his back on Carter's cause).

If songs don't mean anything, why was Victor Jara murdered by Pinochet's henchmen in Chile? Why did striking miners walk to the gallows in South Africa in 1922 singing *The Red Flag*? Why has *We Shall Overcome* been so important to so many protest marches and causes through the years? Why does Billie Holiday singing *Strange Fruit* still fuel such extreme feelings of anger and grief?

These songs, those writers and the singers who perform them are the timeless unequivocal heroes of our music. It would be nice to think a few more of them are waiting somewhere in the wings...

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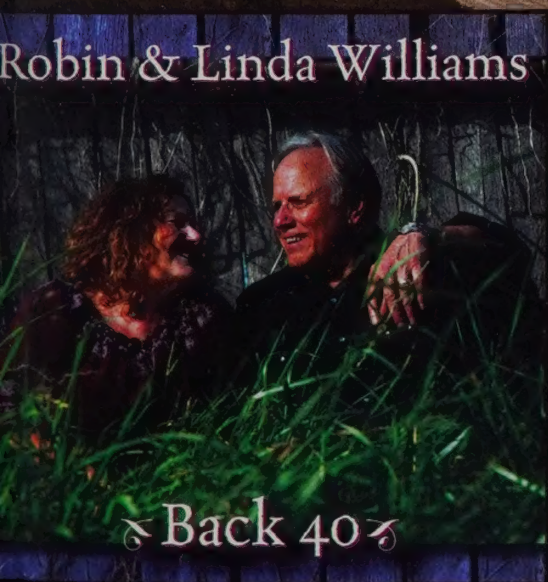
"After you hear Meg, you feel you've been somewhere!" JOHN GORKA

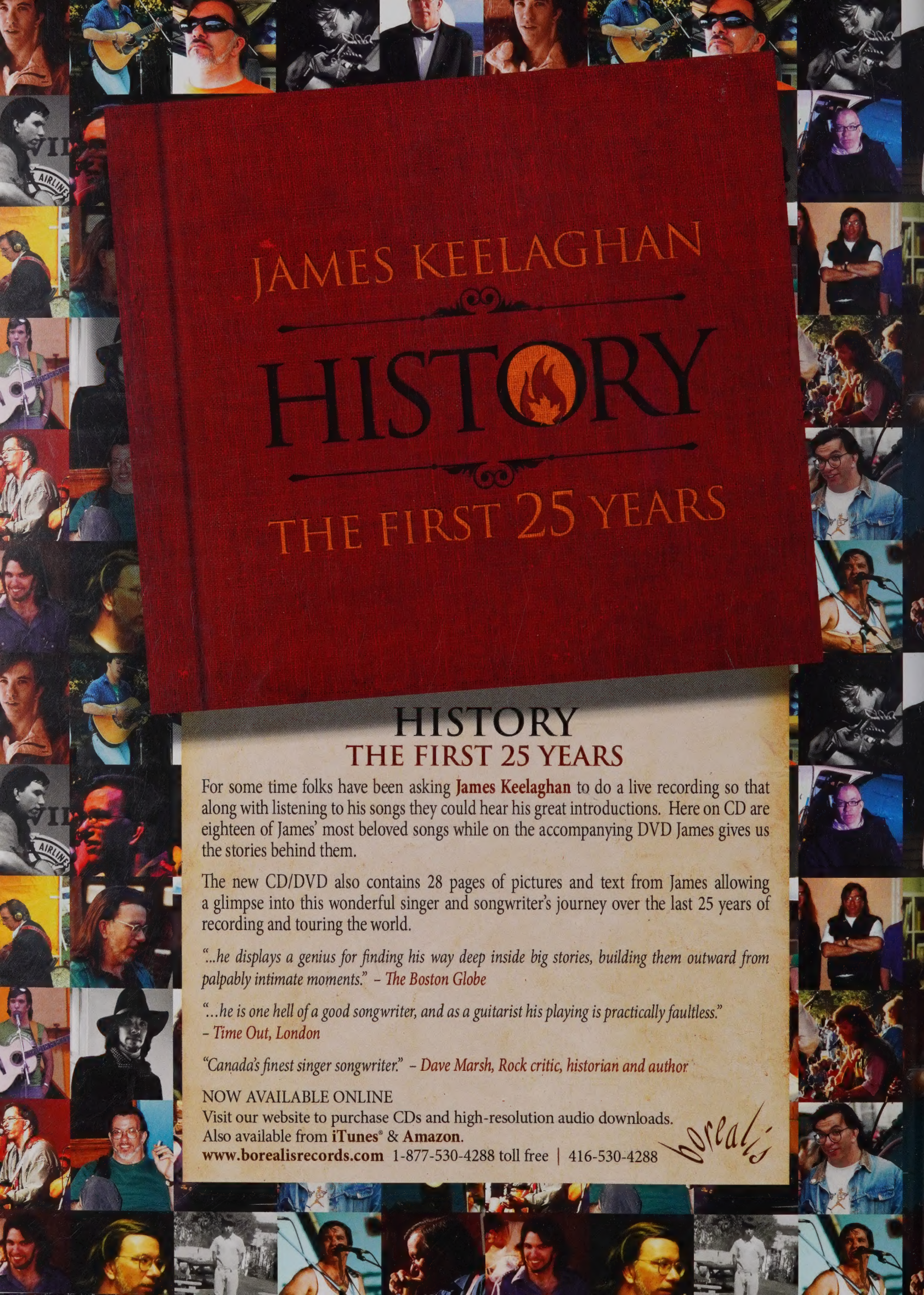


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JAMES KEELAGHAN

HISTORY

THE FIRST 25 YEARS

HISTORY

THE FIRST 25 YEARS

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